

Progressive Planning

The Magazine of Planners Network

Who Rebuilds Haiti?



Photo courtesy of Grassroots International (www.GrassrootsOnline.org)

2008 march in Haiti's Central Plateau to demand a sustainable development policy and rural justice.

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Special Issue on Planning by Transnational Institutions: Can Big Be Beautiful?

World Urban Forum & Social Urban Forum

Resist Arizona's Immigration Law

The Seventh Generation

"In our every deliberation, we must consider the impact of our decisions on the next seven generations."

-From the Great Law of the Iroquois Confederacy

Haiti's Fault Lines: *Made in the U.S.A.*

by Marie Kennedy and Chris Tilly

(This article is reprinted from the March/April 2010 issue of Dollars & Sense.)

The mainstream media got half the story right about Haiti. Reporters observed that Haiti's stark poverty intensified the devastation caused by the recent earthquake. True: Hillside shantytowns, widespread concrete construction without rebar reinforcement, a grossly inadequate road network and a healthcare system mainly designed to cater to the small elite all contributed mightily to death and destruction.

But what caused that poverty? U.S. readers and viewers might be forgiven for concluding that some inexplicable curse has handed Haiti corrupt and unstable governments, unproductive agriculture and widespread illiteracy. Televangelist Pat Robertson simply took this line of "explanation" to its nutty, racist conclusion when he opined that Haitians were paying for a pact with the devil. But the devil had little to do with Haiti's underdevelopment. Instead, the fingerprints of more mundane actors—France and later the United States—are all over the crime scene. After the slave rebellion of 1791, France wrought massive destruction in attempting to recapture its former colony, then extracted 150 million francs of reparations, only fully paid off in 1947. France's most poisonous legacy may have been the skin-color hierarchy that sparked fratricidal violence and still divides Haiti.

While France accepted Haiti once the government started paying up, the United States, alarmed by the example of a slave republic, refused to

recognize Haiti until 1862. That late-arriving recognition kicked off a continuing series of military and political interventions. The U.S. Marines occupied Haiti outright in the period 1915-1934, modernizing the infrastructure but also revising laws to allow foreign ownership, turning over the country's Treasury to a New York bank, saddling Haiti with a \$40 million debt to the United States and reinforcing the status gap between mulattos and blacks. American governments backed the brutal, kleptocratic two-generation Duvalier dictatorship from 1957-1986. When populist priest Jean-Bertrand Aristide was elected president in 1990, the Bush I administration winked at the coup that ousted him a year later. Bill Clinton reversed course, ordering an invasion to restore Aristide, but used that intervention to impose the same free-trade "structural adjustment" Bush had sought. Bush II closed the circle by backing rebels who re-overthrew the re-elected Aristide in 2004. No wonder many Haitians are suspicious of the U.S. troops who poured in after the earthquake.

Though coups and invasions grab headlines, U.S. economic interventions have had equally far-reaching effects. U.S. goals for the last thirty years have been to open Haiti to American products, push Haiti's self-sufficient peasants off the land and redirect the Haitian economy to plantation-grown luxury crops and export assembly, both underpinned by cheap labor. Though Haiti has yet to boost its export capacity, the **cont. on page 7**

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Planning by Transnational Institutions: *Can Big Be Beautiful?*

by Clara Irazábal

Introduction to the Special Issue

“All planning is local,” says a commonly used adage. While it is true that most planning processes require an embeddedness in local contexts, the reality is that in our contemporary world, multiscale planning processes where big multinational institutions intervene are becoming ever more prevalent. Local planning contexts interact with and affect and are affected by regional, national and international agents, conditions and processes. In this context, critical understandings of the roles of big multinational institutions in (dis)enabling sustainable and equitable planning projects and opportunities is underdeveloped and long overdue.

With this theme issue, *Progressive Planning* seeks to bring to the fore this discussion to unveil the traps as well as to illuminate the opportunities that progressive planners may encounter while dealing with, or acting within, big multinational institutions. Such conversation, merely starting to scratch the surface in this theme issue, ought to critically analyze the implications of the actions of big multinational institutions for physical, social, cultural, economic and environmental planning in urban and rural areas from a progressive standpoint. The scrutiny needs to encompass the planning philosophies, practices and projects of different types of multinational institutions: financial institutions such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the World Trade Organization, the Inter-American Development Bank; global institutions of diplomacy and planning such as the United Nations, with its multiple and diverse agencies; governmental institutions such as the Council of the European Union and USAID and equivalent nation-based agencies involved in international planning; transnational private corporations from a variety of sectors such as oil, food, electronics, information and communication

technology (ICT) and apparel; a myriad of bi- or multinational NGOs who claim to do a variety of work, from democratization to education, religious proselytism to environmental planning; and more recently created institutions who claim to resist and redress neoliberalization such as the Bank of the South (*Banco del Sur*) and the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our Americas (*Alianza Bolivariana para los Pueblos de Nuestra América*, ALBA).

When progressive rights activists and organizations repeatedly reveal the devastation brought on communities by the multi-million dollar interventions of the World Bank to create dams and other mega-projects, or the labor rights violations of corporations such as Walmart and Nike, or the accentuation of power imbalances and loss of local sovereignty brought about by “public-private” partnerships promoted by some USAID programs or the poverty provoked by “structural adjustment” packages promoted by the IMF, to name but a few, it becomes hard to discern what a progressive planner can do vis-à-vis these institutions and their practices.

But the resources of such institutions and the energy behind their initiatives do not necessarily have to result in negative impacts for the communities in which they are deployed. With greater cultural sensitivity, understanding of historical and socio-spatial context and truthful partnership with local residents and organizations, big multinational institutions could unleash great potential for progressive transformation of communities around the world. Funding from the Inter-American Bank has been leveled for the rehabilitation of favelas in Rio de Janeiro, the implementation of bus rapid transit in Curitiba and the preservation of the historic center of Quito. While these programs have had

their limitations, they represent a perfectible model of planning assisted by big multinationals. And as Nikhil Aziz mentions in his article about Haiti, organizations such as CARE had the courage to learn and change—amending negative practices and adopting more effective and just ones.

Furthermore, there are phenomenal and successful contestations to the regressive effects of multinationals that progressive movements can learn from and build upon, including: the “water wars” of Cochabamba, Bolivia, that ended a detrimental privatization policy; the story of cities like Atlanta and Buenos Aires, which privatized water, then experienced a decline in service and massive corruption, and at great expense returned water to the public administration; the constitutional challenges in South Africa to cost-recovery water policies; the work of groups like the Blue Planet Project (connected to the Council of Canadians), which opposes water privatization throughout the world; and the position of *La Via Campesina* and Grassroots International on water as a human right provide plenty of inspiration and tactics with which to act.

Moreover, every World Water Forum—a platform for the World Bank and some transnational corporations to promote water privatization and public-private partnerships that remove water from the human rights framework and from the commons—has been protested and interrupted by progressive groups. These groups in turn have led alternative congresses that meet at the same time in opposition. In China, India, Ghana and other countries, big dams have been built with promises of providing housing, jobs, water and electricity to the people displaced by the dam and to surrounding marginalized communities, but these promises have almost never been kept. Instead, water and power have been provided to multinational corporations, spurring large anti-big dam movements, particularly in India.

The articles in this theme issue put some of these matters in the context of particular case studies. From the standpoint of Grassroots International, the International Human Rights Funders Group and the Funders Network on Trade and Globalization,

and drawing on his long-time involvement in Haiti, Nikhil Aziz denounces the contributions that USAID, the International Monetary Fund, the U.N. World Food Programme and the U.N. peacekeeping force MINUSTAH have made to Haiti’s lack of democracy and high level of dependency. Such interventions, he claims, created newer conditions of underdevelopment and disenfranchisement of Haitians. Despite the rhetorical intentions of aid programs with inspirational names, such as the Haitian Hemispheric Opportunity through Partnership Encouragement Act (HOPE), they have had the effect of exploiting workers, devastating the livelihood of many rural residents, fueling rural-to-urban migration and undermining food security. Aziz’s article, on the other hand, mentions the beneficial role of CARE, the Haitian Platform to Advocate Alternative Development and the Platform of Haitian Human Rights Organizations (PAPDA and POHDH, respectively, both Grassroots International partners), and international media such as *The Nation* and *Democracy Now*. Now that conditions have worsened in Haiti after the January 2010 earthquake that devastated Port-au-Prince, it is time to act in ways that avoid the mistakes of the past and to envision a holistic reconstruction effort primarily based upon people-to-people initiatives, which the article claims amounts to “structural solidarity.”

Greg Contente discusses how, after a history rooted in exploitation by foreign powers, Bolivia is trying to redefine its relationship with these powers with its plans for lithium mining. In the 1990s, the transnational Lithium Corporation had unsuccessfully attempted to purchase rights to the Andean lithium reserves, demanding tax havens and environmental deregulation. Today, transnational companies discuss possible joint ventures with the government, even in face of the nationalization of similar industries. The country’s socialist government is aiming for the benefits to go to the Bolivian people, but Bolivia has to compete globally with transnationals operating in Chile, Argentina and China and needs to attract further investment. Proposals from potential transnational investors and financiers are not totally out of the question, given this competition, as the country tries to maneuver a difficult balance between sovereignty and development.

Transnational corporations are always planners, engineering their environment to realize maximum profits, for example, by locating production where it is cheaper. Andrea Marpillero-Colomina presents an interesting perspective about corporations as planners, examining Nike's efforts to expand and redirect its planning capacity from purchasing focused only on price and quality to purchasing that incorporated labor standards. The corporation was only moved to do so, however, when the success of the anti-sweatshop movement seriously threatened Nike's consumer base. This is economic planning, balancing the profit margin it could realize from unfair labor practices with the profits it would lose by a loss of customers. The violation of decent labor conditions in supplier factories is a problem that many transnational corporations face, so the efforts of Nike and others to redress this problem can be very beneficial. In fact, this sort of private regulation is particularly important where public regulation is ineffective or has been rolled back by neoliberalism and free trade rules, such as those of the WTO. The Nike Village Development Project in Thailand reveals the dimension of the corporation as physical planner as well. This initiative, however, does not have the scale and impact of the global enforcement of labor standards. In fact, it is perhaps not too different from Coca Cola giving to the United Way—more an issue of public relations and charity in an effort to clean up its public image. In any case, Marpillero-Colomina's article alerts us to the need to pay attention to the physical impact that transnational corporations have in the places where they operate. Often they cause massive environmental devastation, such as the deforestation of the Ecuadorian Amazon by Chevron and Texaco or the damage to river basins by Nestle in many areas of the U.S.

Laura Parisi brings her extensive expertise on gender and human rights, development and transnational feminism to bear on her analysis of the U.N. Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). Parisi acknowledges the importance of the committee's work in denouncing crimes against women, such as when, in 2003, the committee conducted an investigation into the femicide in the export-processing zones in Ciudad Juárez, Mexico. Although the committee's recom-

mendations were non-binding, its report was still an important public feminist statement that added to the shame and pressure being placed on the Mexican government. Parisi offers proactive measures for the CEDAW committee to expand its influence on the achievement of substantive equality for women. These measures could enable its non-binding recommendations to be concretely realized through legal reforms with significant social implications for community transformation. The committee's work is relevant to planning because it can influence legislative change in states, which in turn impacts localities and community groups. This influence has expanded in the context of gender mainstreaming mandates in recent years at both the U.N. and state level and the 2009 decision of the U.N. to create a new and consolidated women's agency, opening up new possibilities for achieving women's human rights. The creation of a women's agency is groundbreaking and can put women's issues at the same level of institutional power as that in other U.N. agencies. Parisi points out that this is a victory of feminist activists, which underlines the need to continue to pressure the big institutions to evolve and act in progressive ways.

Reflecting on his experience in South Africa as organic intellectual, Richard Pithouse warns us to be weary of a tendency of NGOs substituting themselves for popular organizations in international networks in poorer parts of the world where organizations have limited access to transport and communication technologies. He also denounces the role of big multinational institutions in instilling in the public a need for structural adjustment policies, public-private partnership programs and other policies and programs that ultimately subject governments to their rule and demobilize people who otherwise would demand systemic changes against poverty. Pithouse reflects on the many challenges popular organizations face in order to organize and confront local struggles and big multinational institutions, let alone to build global solidarity movements against oppressive living conditions. His reflections alert us against easy assumptions that international networking is inherently superior to local activism, and instead

encourage us to continue searching for modes of international connections between the Global North and South that are more just and effective.

Progressive Planning's problematizing of the practices of big multinational institutions does not stop with these four articles. On the contrary, we extend an invitation to be mindful of how some technologies of governance portrayed as benevolent, i.e., as providing humanitarian aid or as instrument of needed modernization, may instead be facilitating an expansion of corporate capitalism and new forms of imperialism. In fact, some multinational institutions have operated as instruments of powerful national empires. In the *Seventh Generation* article in this issue, for instance, Marie Kennedy and Chris Tilly discuss how the U.S. intervention in Haiti has been institutionalized and operationalized through the U.N., USAID and other institutions. Yet, the same article discusses how other transnational organizations have provided a progressive counterpoint to those practices.

We need to expand awareness and analysis beyond the 'usual suspects' of globalization and transnationalism from above to better

understand and be able to act progressively within the unfolding transformations of democracy, development, crisis-intervention and transnational activism in the world today. The time is ripe for complementing oppositional politics with proactive politics capable of bringing about the visions of sustainable and equitable development that we want to see in the world.

Clara Irazábal is an assistant professor of urban planning at Columbia University's Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation in New York City. Her research focuses on the politics of placemaking and their impact on community development and socio-spatial justice. She served as the theme editor of this issue of Progressive Planning.

Kennedy and Tilly, cont'd from page 2

first two goals have succeeded, shattering Haiti's former productive capacity. In the early 1980s, the U.S. Agency for International Development exterminated Haiti's hardy Creole pigs in the name of preventing a swine flu epidemic, then helpfully offered U.S. pigs that require expensive U.S.-produced feeds and medicines. Cheap American rice imports so crippled the country's breadbasket, the Artibonite, that Haiti, a rice exporter in the 1980s, now imports massive amounts. Former peasants flooded into Port-au-Prince, doubling the population over the last quarter of a century, building makeshift housing, and setting the stage for the current catastrophe.

In the wake of the disaster, U.S. aid continues to have two-edged effects. Each aid shipment that flies in American rice and flour instead of buying

and distributing local rice or cassava continues to undermine agriculture and deepen dependency. Precious trucks and airstrips are used to marshal U.S. troops against overblown "security threats," crowding out humanitarian assistance. The United States and other international donors show signs of once more using aid to leverage a free-trade agenda. If we seek to end Haiti's curse, the first step is to realize that one of the curse's main sources is...us.

Marie Kennedy and Chris Tilly, both affiliated with UCLA, are present and past board members of Grassroots International (www.grassrootsonline.org), which has worked with Haitian partners for nearly twenty years (including on current relief). Kennedy is an editor of Progressive Planning and Tilly is a Dollars & Sense associate.

Feeding Dependency, Starving Democracy...Still

by **Nikhil Aziz**

(A shorter version of this article was published by CommonDreams.org on March 16, 2010.)

Some of the advice for how Haiti ought to rebuild after the earthquake sounds hauntingly familiar, echoing the same bad development advice that Haiti has received for decades, even before the nation faced its current devastating situation. To avoid repeating the past failures, we would be wise to review how previous aid models led down the wrong path.

Twelve years ago, Grassroots International released a research study entitled “Feeding Dependency, Starving Democracy: USAID Policies in Haiti.” Offering an in-depth examination of U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) development policies in Haiti, the study concluded that, as the title suggests, official aid actually damaged the very aspects of Haitian society it was allegedly trying to fix—namely it created a lack of democracy and too much dependency.

The study was particularly critical of the development community for making Haiti into a net food importer when it had been nearly self-sufficient, and in fact a major rice producer. Despite, or because of, years of aid programs and

structural adjustment policies imposed by international financial institutions and donor countries, the study found that Haiti’s food dependency was actually increasing. This disturbing result was partially caused by subsidized food aid programs that benefited transnational agribusiness corporations but didn’t help Haitians grow food for their families. Sadly, much of the 12-year-old study could have been written today.

As recently as 2007, a USAID agronomist told Grassroots International that there simply was no future for Haiti’s small farm sector, a callous prognosis for the nation’s 3 million-plus small farmers (of a population of 9 million). In a nutshell, USAID’s plan for Haiti and many other poor countries has been to push farmers out of subsistence agriculture as quickly as possible. Farmers that might otherwise be supported to grow food are frequently engaged as laborers in work-for-food programs. Rather than pursue innovative programs to keep rural food markets local and support food sovereignty, misguided aid programs encourage farmers to grow higher value export crops such as cashews, coffee and, more recently, jatropha for agrofuels.

USAID policies seek to make optimum use of Haiti’s

“comparative advantage”—i.e., its abundant cheap labor—by funneling displaced farmers into low-wage assembly plants in the cities or near the Dominican border. The result is staggering levels of rural-to-urban migration, leading to dangerous overcrowding of Port-au-Prince. Passed by the U.S. Congress in 2006, programs such as the Haitian Hemispheric Opportunity through Partnership Encouragement Act (HOPE) have lured transnational companies to Haiti with offers of no-tariff exports on textiles assembled in Haitian factories to capitalize on this pool of laborers.

In the name of rebuilding Haiti, will USAID and other large donor and aid agencies pursue this same formula over the coming years? Or will it take a different tack that includes making Haiti’s vibrant network of civil society organizations central to rebuilding efforts?

While there is widespread hand-wringing in the media that rebuilding efforts are hampered by the desperate poverty and lack of infrastructure, there is very little introspection about whether aid strategies and development and monetary policies may have actually contributed to this impoverishment and how those ought to change. Such critiques

are usually relegated to alternative media sources like *The Nation* and *Democracy Now*, or groups that have long-standing relations with grassroots Haitian movements.

Export-driven aid and development policies were a bad idea before the earthquake, and they are a terrible idea now. A wage freeze advocated by the International Monetary Fund shortly after the earthquake is simply inhumane and out of touch with reality.

Since our 1997 Grassroots International report, we note the following troubling trends.

- Food aid and food import dependency in Haiti has continued to rise despite the fact that the U.N. World Food Programme has been operating in Haiti since 1969. In 1980, Haiti imported 16,000 metric tons of rice. After two successive phases of trade liberalization, Haiti was, by 2004, importing 270,000 metric tons, a 17-fold increase. When prices of imported foods spiked in 2007, hungry families

rebelled. Policies advancing food sovereignty are few, although we note the Herculean work of many Haitian popular and non-governmental organizations in strengthening the ability of Haitian small farmers to grow food for their families and local markets.

- Rural-to-urban migration has risen annually by nearly 4.5 percent. Although this trend showed immediate reversal after the earthquake, sprawling cities like Port-au-Prince had expanded

rapidly, resulting in shoddily constructed and vulnerable slums. These neighborhoods, buried by mud in the hurricanes of 2008, are now crushed under rubble.

- Haiti's ecology continues to deteriorate, demonstrated by the tremendous loss of life and soil in recent hurricanes. Forests barely cover 2 percent of Haitian territory, and between 1990 and 2000 the United Nations Development Programme reports that natural forest cover declined by 50 percent



TOP: Office of the Peasant Movement of Papaye (MPP) after the earthquake

BOTTOM:
More earthquake damage

- Promises of a robust assembly plant/*maquila* sector that could absorb unemployed farmers, spurred by the HOPE initiatives, have fallen short of expectations, creating far fewer jobs than imagined and at even lower wages than hoped. Worldwide competition for these assembly plants remains fierce; investors have found more attractive places than Haiti to set up shop. Casting further gloom on this sector is the current slowdown in the global economy. Fewer assembly plants may be necessary and the destruction of Haiti's infrastructure makes it unlikely that plants would relocate there

- The experience of living with foreign troops has been difficult for Haiti. The U.N. Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), a peacekeeping force, has received mixed reports at best. Over the last six years it has stationed between 6,000 and 9,000 troops in Haiti at enormous public expense. Many Haitians describe their situation as a military occupation, harkening back to frequent occupations in Haiti's history. The Platform of Haitian Human Rights Organizations (POHDH), a Grassroots International partner, has documented numerous human rights abuses by MINUSTAH personnel. Development plans of some donor countries will rely on foreign troops for implementation, which may lead to more dependency and social unrest. A cautionary note about militarized aid comes from wary Haitians quoted in the media: "We asked for 10,000 doctors and nurses; we got 10,000 soldiers."

- Haiti's foreign debt continued to rise from \$1.2 to \$1.5 billion in the period from 2003-2009. International lenders insisted on balancing budgets even if that

meant cutting essential social services. Thankfully, there is now some movement towards debt cancellation.

What is a sound rehabilitation plan going forward? Camille Chalmers of the Haitian Platform to Advocate Alternative Development (PAPDA), another Grassroots International partner, has made some suggestions in these early days after the quake. Instead of traditional agency-to-agency aid that turns Haitians into "aid recipients" rather than protagonists of their recovery, this needs to be a people-to-people effort, what Chalmers describes as "structural solidarity."

Chalmers notes that this reconstruction can't be relegated to simply physical infrastructure. He asks that we work holistically to:

1. Overcome illiteracy, which afflicts 45 percent of the population;
2. Build an effective public school system that is both free and respects the history, culture and ecosystems of Haiti;
3. Reverse the environmental crisis and rebuild Haiti's thirty watersheds with the massive participation of young people and international volunteers;
4. Fight child mortality, malnutrition and maternal mortality (currently 630 women per 100,000 live births) by constructing a new public health system that brings together modern and traditional medicine and offers quality, affordable primary services to the entire population;



LEFT: Woman farmer speaking at the 35th anniversary of the Peasant Movement of Papaye (MPP)

OPPOSITE: Growing trees for reforestation in an MPP greenhouse

5. Reconstruct a new capital city based on a different logic: humane and balanced urbanization that respects workers as the true wealth creators and privileges public transportation, parks that maximize biodiversity, urban agriculture and popular arts;
6. Move toward food sovereignty based on comprehensive agrarian reform, prioritizing agricultural investments that respect ecosystems, biodiversity and the needs and culture of small farmers;
7. Cut dependency ties with Washington, the European Union and others, and abandon policies issued by different versions of the "Washington Consensus"; and
8. End MINUSTAH and instead build people-to-people solidarity brigades.

What would a holistic rehabilitation and development plan of this nature require? Much more than money! It would require a reversal of policies that are at their core counter to healthy, sustainable development. It would mean a stop to attempts to pry Haiti's economy open to imports and to balance Haiti's budget by cutting health and education spending. It would mean a start to implementing policies for environmentally-friendly food sovereignty so that Haitians can eat the food they grow in fields that hold the soil and to a massive virtuous circle of support for both the governmental and non-governmental sectors so that they can grow strong together.

While many aspects of Haiti's reality have stayed the same since Grassroots International published "Feeding Dependency, Starving Democracy" in 1998,

others have changed for the better. Some aid agencies, such as CARE, took to heart many of the findings in the study and altered the way it provided aid. For example, in 2007 CARE gave up \$45 million in annual federal funding because, as it said, "American food aid is not only plagued with inefficiencies, but also may hurt some of the very poor people it aims to help." Other agencies expanded partnerships with Haitian social movements and utilized local expertise to inform their programs.

An essential part of Grassroots International's work with the Haitian people over the coming years will be to try to keep the development industry honest and advocate for exactly this kind of long-term, holistic aid. At the same time, we'll continue to build the kind of people-to-people solidarity that Chalmers suggests, helping grassroots organizations steer Haiti's development agenda through the challenging decades ahead.

Nikhil Aziz is the executive director of Grassroots International (www.grassrootsonline.org). He also serves on the steering committee of the International Human Rights Funders Group and the Funders Network on Trade and Globalization. "Feeding Dependency, Starving Democracy: USAID Policies in Haiti" is available at <http://www.grassrootsonline.org>.



From Reaction to Proaction: *Expanding the Scope of the CEDAW Committee's Influence*

by Laura Parisi

The United Nations (U.N.) Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women is charged with overseeing member states' implementation of the 1979 U.N. Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). More recently, the CEDAW committee has expanded its mandate to monitor the implementation of the 1995 U.N. Beijing Platform for Action that resulted from the Fourth World Conference on Women. The CEDAW committee is also now receiving communications under the Convention's Optional Protocol in which individuals can file human rights complaints against states directly with the committee. The Optional Protocol also grants the committee power to conduct investigations with regard to women's human rights violations. Meeting just three times a year, this 23-person committee is responsible for advocating on behalf of the world's women and ensuring that governments comply with the primary women's human rights treaty. This has not been an easy task—the convention has been one of the most highly contested human rights treaties ever produced in the U.N. system, and numerous states have attached “reservations” to the treaty, effectively claiming exemption from certain provisions.

In the recently published book *The Circle of Empowerment: Thirty-Five Years of the U.N. Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women* (Hanna Beate Schöp Schilling and Cees Flinterman, eds.), the story of the committee is told by fifty contributors, most of whom have been members of the committee at some point in the last twenty-five years. Their accounts illuminate the struggles of a committee that has historically been marginalized within the larger human rights framework,

providing great insight into committee members' thought processes as they tackled topics ranging from violence against women to labor rights, and as they continued to expand the notion of women's human rights in creative and multiple ways.

The contributors also detail the committee's struggle with how to define itself in the context of new realities and responsibilities. Three of these responsibilities are notable for the purposes of this essay: 1) defining appropriate responses to non-state actors, such as non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and multinational corporations (MNCs); 2) deciding how to address the impact of globalization on women's human rights; and 3) discussing the potential promise and pitfalls of the Optional Protocol.

Since the convention has been and continues to be an important tool wielded by feminist activists on the ground to influence political, social and economic change, I consider how the CEDAW committee might address these issues in light of two recent and important developments. The first development is the formal adoption and deepening of gender mainstreaming mandates over the last decade at both the U.N. and state level (in the form of women's ministries, etc.). The committee's work is increasingly important for planning in a broad sense, as one of its central mandates is to influence legislative change in states, which in turn has policy implications for social and community transformation. The second development is the September 2009 U.N. decision to create a new and consolidated women's agency. Thus, the committee is entering a new era in the U.N. with regard to gender equality and women's empowerment, opening up new possibilities for influencing and engaging processes aimed at achieving women's human rights.

From Reaction to Proaction: Expanding the Scope of CEDAW's Influence

One of the main critiques levied at the committee is that its recommendations to states on how to improve or achieve women's human rights are not binding. The reporting process, in which the committee evaluates and comments on state reports as well as considers information submitted by NGOs, positions the committee as a reactive body rather than a proactive one. However, even though the committee's recommendations (called concluding observations) are non-binding, there are both indirect and direct ways that the committee can proactively influence the adoption of their recommendations.

1) Create a follow-up mechanism to monitor and assist states with eradicating laws that are discriminatory towards women.

In its forty-second session report (2008-09), the CEDAW committee notes that it has revisited a discussion from 2005 about establishing a follow-up mechanism to assist states in meeting their obligations to reform legislation that is discriminatory towards women. This assistance would include, but not be limited to, gender impact analyses of legislation as a form of awareness-raising in different government sectors, such as parliaments and judicial systems, and

the identification of partners who could provide financial and technical assistance to the legal reform process.

Though the committee has yet to come to a firm decision about the adoption of such a mechanism, it is currently considering two possible options. One option is the creation of a standing working group within the committee which would be charged with following up with state parties on recommendations for removing legislation that discriminates against women by enlisting current and former members of the committee. The rationale behind this proposal is that the diversity of membership would lend a critical insight into different cultures and legal systems which could be beneficial in terms of finding solutions to repealing and/or revising sex discriminatory laws. It would also allow for analysis of the relationship between gender and culture, and how this intersection creates specific and unique forms of inequality that are often invisibilized in the law, thus allowing the committee to pursue its mandate of achieving substantive equality for women, rather than just formal equality.

The second proposed option is the creation of an independent commission that would function as a "Special Rapporteur" on sex discriminatory legislation which would build off of the recommendations of the committee to work with all states, regardless of

Quilt image courtesy of UNFEM/Alimjan Jorobaev



A quilt produced by more than 200 marginalized Kyrgyz women to commemorate the 30th anniversary of CEDAW. The process of making the quilt raised these women's awareness about their rights under CEDAW.

whether or not they are parties to the convention. This mechanism would also report to the Human Rights Council (HRC) and to the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), which would aid in gender mainstreaming the work of the HRC as well in ensuring that women's human rights issues are highlighted in the work of CSW, which is institutionally located in the U.N. Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). Forging a stronger connection with the committee and CSW would further buttress the work on the new U.N. women's agency, and perhaps aid the committee's struggles with how to address the impact of globalization on women's human rights. Also, while the committee has been more open to working with NGOs in recent years and is currently debating how best to work with civil society organizations, CSW has a deeply entrenched relationship with women's human rights and development organizations, given the extensive roster of those who have consultative status with ECOSOC. Should the committee begin to regularly report to CSW, there could be increased communication with and participation by NGOs (both directly and indirectly), since CSW could serve as another conduit to the committee.

Both proposed options would be useful in expanding the scope, visibility and transparency of the committee's work and increasing the participation of civil society to hold states accountable for sex discrimination. It would also allow the committee to consider the role of MNCs; assisting states with legal reform may provide an opportunity to influence the regulation of MNCs, or to bring MNCs into the dialogue in a more proactive way. In any case, the committee should consider adopting one of these

mechanisms, or perhaps a combination of the two, now that women's issues are on the ascent, given the creation of the new women's agency, which will be at the same level of institutional power as other agencies like the U.N. Children's Fund, the U.N. Population Fund and the U.N. Refugee Agency. The committee should capitalize on this important victory by feminist activists by creating and supporting a mechanism which furthers the CEDAW committee goals of ensuring that legal reform translates into substantive and meaningful improvements in the daily lived realities of marginalized peoples.

2) *Conduct more independent investigations.*

Under the Optional Protocol, which currently has ninety-eight state parties, the committee can conduct independent investigations into human rights abuses if it determines through reliable sources that the abuses are either: 1) grave, which means that violations threaten the right to life, security and bodily integrity; and/or 2) systematic, which means that abuses are not isolated incidents, but constitute a pattern. The committee can launch its own inquiry or do so at the request of another entity, such as an NGO, without permission from state parties, although it does need a state's permission to conduct an investigation on the ground.

In 2003, the committee, in response to a request submitted by two NGOs, conducted an independent investigation into the alarming murder rate of young women in the export processing zones in Ciudad Juárez, Mexico. This investigation was the first of its kind for the committee, which determined that the situation in

UN Photo by Eskinder Debebe



LEFT: Ms. Naéla Gabr of Egypt, the current CEDAW committee Chairperson

Ciudad Juárez constituted both grave and systematic violations of women's human rights. The committee interviewed local activists and families in the area in an attempt to understand the root causes of violence against women in a more holistic way and how this violence was affecting the community. In this way, its investigation went beyond looking at legal protections by giving a space to marginalized voices to be heard. The committee also looked at structural causes, such as poverty and other social conditions, as well as the cultural construction of gender in the Mexican context in order to understand why Mexican officials had placed little priority on a criminal investigation.

Although the committee's recommendations were non-binding, its report was still an important public feminist statement on femicide, adding to the increasing pressure being put on the Mexican government by both regional and international entities. In December 2009, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights found the Mexican government in violation of its obligations to protect women from violence in the Ciudad Juárez case. The government has been ordered to pay reparations to victims' families as well as institute preventative measures, which may indirectly influence the conduct of MNCs in the export processing zones. I relay this story to emphasize the important role the CEDAW committee could play in gathering evidence necessary for such judicial outcomes. The Juárez investigation also reveals the ways in which the committee can study the impact of globalization on women's human rights and how judicial mechanisms

can deal with these impacts. As the committee is also trying to figure out how to best work with NGOs, this case charts an alternative path. Since NGOs are not always an accurate proxy for civil society, however, the committee's decision to interview families in the community gave individuals direct access to a U.N. body that they would not normally have access to. In short, one of the most powerful tools the committee has is the power to shame governments into fulfilling their human rights obligations, and it should consider launching more of these independent investigations in the field (particularly self-initiated ones) and providing gender expertise to investigations carried out by other human rights bodies in the U.N. It should also continue its work to garner more state parties to ratify the Optional Protocol.

In conclusion, the CEDAW could deepen and expand its influence on the achievement of substantive equality for women through the proactive measures described above. These measures could enable its non-binding recommendations to be concretely realized through legal reform that is contextualized in a holistic way. Should the committee embark on this path, there will be important legal and social implications for progressive planners to consider regarding community transformation.

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Forthcoming Theme Issues of Progressive Planning:

Age Sensitive Planning Greenwashing

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The Complicated Relationship of Transnational Organizations and Local Popular Movements: *Reflections from South Africa*

by *Richard Pithouse*

It's often assumed that the international reach of big multinational institutions like the World Bank and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), along with many of the NGOs allied to them, needs to be matched by a counter internationalism from below. In the richer parts of the world, where there is better access to transport and communication technologies, it may well be possible for popular organizations to organize across borders and to send representatives to international meetings on their own terms. But in the poorer parts of the world it is often extremely difficult for popular organizations to work internationally. In these cases, the assumption that an effective response to the big multinational institutions must be a global response results in a tendency by NGOs to substitute themselves for popular organizations in international networks.

There is no doubt that big multinational institutions have a very strong influence on how elites around the world understand cities and the competing claims of their residents. This influence can take the form of simple coercion, as with World Bank structural adjustment programs. It can also take the form of "partnerships," as with various projects of organizations like USAID or the Cities Alliance, in which governments are won over with funding and the idea that these organizations offer "world-class" technical expertise. But these organizations don't just try to subordinate or co-opt governments to their agendas; they also work with academics, NGOs and the media to shape the general understanding of cities and the competing claims of the different people and social forces that inhabit them. They also support projects that, like Slum Dwellers

International, aim to mobilize poor people to accept oppression and to work within its limits rather than to challenge it directly.

Given the tremendous power of the big multinational institutions, it is no surprise that so many people argue that their global power must be challenged by global alliances of poor people and their supporters. This is not a new idea. When capitalism first spread across the globe, it was often argued that the workers' movement must also internationalize itself. But although there were lots of inspiring examples of international cooperation between trade unions in different countries, the workers' movement ultimately failed to organize itself in a truly international manner. On the contrary, workers often accepted the division of the working class into hierarchies based on nationality, race and gender. This meant that workers in the dominated countries often had to wage their own struggles as independent interventions because the workers' movement that called itself "global" wasn't really for all workers and didn't recognize the realities of particular places in

RIGHT: Abahlali baseMjondolo members from the new land occupation in Macasar Village, Cape Town, march into the city, May 25, 2009.

FAR RIGHT: Abahlali baseMjondolo protest at the Kennedy Road settlement, September 14, 2005.

the world. This fact should lead us to be cautious of any easy optimism about a global solidarity against the big multi-national institutions.

We also need to remember that, while organized workers in many countries have their own resources in the form of union dues, the urban poor often have extremely precarious livelihoods and are not able to fund their own organizations to undertake international work. International networking usually happens through the internet and international air travel. Many poor people's organizations do not have regular access to the internet—it's often a struggle just to gain and sustain access to electricity. And of course, air travel is often entirely unaffordable and it's sometimes difficult for poor people to get visas.

When donors are willing to fund international networking by popular movements, they usually do so on their own terms and for their own projects and not in dialogue with the movements. And when movements are able to raise their own money they are often confronted with urgent immediate expenses for the costs of day-to-day organizing—costs that escalate enormously when state repression has to be confronted. Popular organizations will simply not survive if they do not prioritize collective work, like holding regular meetings, opposing evictions and supporting prisoners, over individual opportunities for international travel.

Moreover, because most of the organizations that network internationally are professional organizations, they can often make decisions

quite quickly and on an individual basis. But if a popular movement is democratic, the decision-making process is inherently slow. For instance, if a shack dweller's movement receives an email inviting the movement to send a representative to a meeting, the movement may not receive the email until a few days after it has been sent. Once it does receive it, it will have to find space on its regular meeting agenda to discuss the invitation. This may be difficult if it is in the midst of confronting urgent issues like evictions or arrests. Once the issue has been discussed, the movement may decide that it needs to do some research on the proposed invitation before it can consider it carefully. Once that has been done, it may have to refer the invitation back to the branches of the movement for further discussion. If people agree to accept the invitation, they'll then have to elect a representative to attend the meeting. That person will then have to begin the process of applying for a passport and a visa. All of this could easily take a few months. But most of the time, when an invitation is sent a reply is expected within days or, at best, a couple of weeks. If movements allow themselves to be pressured into giving up democratic politics, which is slow politics, for the fast politics of the NGO world, they tend to lose their mass support very quickly.

These material and political constraints to international networking mean that in poorer parts of the world, like Africa, it is donor-funded NGOs rather than popular organizations that are able to monopolize or to regulate access to international

Photo by Abahlali baseMjondolo of the Western Cape



Photo by Richard Pithouse



spaces like the World Social Forum and regional social forums. And if popular movements are able to win some autonomous access to these spaces, they often find that all the important decisions have already been taken care of on email by NGOs and academics before the meetings start.

The pervasive substitution of popular movements by NGOs in international forums and networks leads to all kinds of problems. The power relations between the NGOs and the popular movements will always be driven by class and may well also be driven by race, gender and nationality. While NGOs often tend to present the problems faced by poor people as technical policy questions, popular movements, driven by the day-to-day concerns of their members, often see the root cause of the problems in political questions about power relations. Moreover, the donor-funded NGOs tend to orient much of their work around the concerns and interests of their funders in the global North. In some cases, this leads them to try and capture the representation of popular movements in the South in order to deliver the appearance of popular support for the projects of their funders and allies in the North. In these cases, the NGOs tend to become very anxious, and in some instances highly authoritarian, when popular movements insist on representing themselves and on developing their own analysis of their situation. In South Africa, NGOs that work with the big multinational organizations as well as those that oppose them have both responded with shocking authoritarianism that, in some respects, mimics that of the state when popular movements have insisted

on the right to represent themselves.

But perhaps the most fundamental difference between the donor-funded professional NGOs and the popular movements is that the former can only make arguments about how to achieve a better world, while the latter may attain the mass support to actually force governments, wealthy communities and big business to make concessions.

NGOs often justify their power over popular movements by saying that the movements are parochial and don't understand the big picture. It is true that NGOs are often better placed to have a global picture, but while this is important, they usually fail to confront local political realities on the ground, which have to be confronted before any kind of popular mobilization is possible. And there are a lot of examples of how highly mobilized communities have won all kinds of victories and concessions from governments and multinational organizations by having organized themselves to become a powerful force on the ground. Ideally, on-the-ground movements should be able to have a conversation, on the basis of equality, with the NGOs and academics that are more easily able to take a global view. There is much that both sides can learn from each other. But for as long as the NGOs and academics deny this equality, that conversation cannot happen. What happens instead is often more like a form of top-down, stultifying instruction far removed from the lived realities of life and struggle confronted by popular movements.

In South Africa, the two most important popular urban movements walked out of the national NGO-

Photo by Raj Patel



Photo by Kerry Chance



dominated networking forum—a forum that also sought to regulate international networking—in 2006 because they felt that they were systematically disrespected by the NGOs and treated as if they were stupid rather than poor. They also felt that the NGOs were exploiting the movements so that the NGOs could develop their own power in international networks, rather than supporting the movements to develop power on the ground.

This walkout meant that the movements gave up access to NGO money and opportunities for international travel. But by building their own power in their communities on their own terms, the movements were later able to form more equitable relations with different NGOs that were prepared to put aside assumptions of superiority and to respond to the challenge issued by the movements to support, rather than lead. The movements were also able to develop their own relationships, often non-professionalized, with activists from other countries. Through these relationships, it slowly became possible for the movements to make international connections on their own terms with the political support of people that they knew and trusted. For instance, the shack dwellers movement Abahlali baseMjondolo was able to elect representatives to visit London and New York last year. Important solidarity initiatives were developed during these trips. Ashraf Cassiem from the Western Cape Anti-Eviction Campaign in Cape Town was able to visit the United States recently, and after his visit, a Chicago Anti-Eviction Campaign was formed.

FAR LEFT: Abahlali baseMjondolo protest in the Foreman Road settlement, November 14, 2005

NEAR LEFT: Ashraf Cassiem from the Western Cape Anti-Eviction Campaign speaks outside the Constitutional Court in Johannesburg at the hearing of the case that Abahlali baseMjondolo successfully brought against the Slums Act, May 15, 2009.

This mode of developing international connections is far from perfect. For a start, it's been based on individual relations with activists from the North who have come and lived in communities of struggle. These activists have earned the respect of the host communities and gained a real understanding of their situation and the political choices with which they confront that situation. But the problem with this mode of developing an internationalism to counter that of the big multinational organizations is that the reality of the global political economy means that while American or British activists may be able to afford to come and live in a struggling community in South Africa for a few months, a similar exchange doesn't happen with Nigeria or Pakistan. But because these relations are based on slow politics, and on a clear understanding of the realities on the ground, they have enabled fruitful experiments in international networking, including the beginnings of direct, unmediated relationships between at least some people in popular movements in different countries.

We should not assume that international networking is automatically superior to local activism. To do so not only marginalizes the poor from their own struggles, it is also politically wrongheaded because it doesn't take into account the important reality that local expressions of international power can and often have been beaten back by local organization. We should recognize that international networking is valuable but that popular movements can't rely on the professionalized circuits of NGO and academic activism to achieve this. If popular movements are going to be able to represent themselves, to share their experiences and to build genuine solidarity internationally, then they will have to look for ways to build slower and more democratic processes that enable direct horizontal relations, including solid personal relations, between movements.

Richard Pithouse has been a member of Abahlali baseMjondolo since the movement's inception. He teaches politics at Rhodes University in South Africa.

Nike Reimagined: A Case Study Examining Expanded Corporate Planning Capacity

by Andrea Marpillero-Colomina

In October 1996, when the Niketown opened in an upscale shopping strip in New York City, the store was the site of a large demonstration protesting Nike labor practices in Vietnam and other Southeast Asian countries. The protest disrupted sidewalk traffic and deterred customers from entering the store, and Niketown became an emblematic site of the inequity within Nike's vertically integrated transnational production system. For Nike, this was a turning point, its corporate space and profits placed under direct threat.

Nike, which commands over 45 percent of the global athletic shoe market, began to expand and redirect its corporate planning functions as a response to the conditions of globalized production systems, which have transformed the face and functionality of labor. In this current era of free trade and diminished limitations to cross-border production practices, Nike has followed corporate trends by geographically dispersing its economic operations in order to reduce labor costs and improve productivity levels. This aggressively profit-driven dispersion of operations often cultivates conditions which violate the human rights of workers. In the 1990s, Nike was exposed for brutal working conditions at some of its remote factory sites.

Let's step back to examine the larger theoretical context. In a 2008 *Global Networks* (Volume 8, Issue 1) article, Zachary Neal presents the concept of "the world city network." This network is defined as a construct of globalization wherein "key cities throughout the world are used by global capital as 'basing points' in the spatial organization and articulation of production and markets." These cities are organized as "spaces of flows," facilitating the production and transfer of capital and labor. Drawing from the writings of urban sociologist Saskia Sassen, Neal explains that "despite the geographic dispersion which is globalization's

namesake, there is at the same time a concentration of certain activities in certain cities." Within areas of concentrated production, the unequal distribution of wealth between the high-paid workers of transnational corporations and the low-paid workers who support the production processes of these firms is particularly pronounced; congruent with the activities specific to world cities is concentrated inequity.

"World firms" operate within these world cities and world city networks. Like in global cities, where research has indicated that indices of inequity are higher than in non-global cities, Neal finds that inequity in globalized firms is statistically significant. In concurrence with Neal's findings, it seems evident that it is the structural mechanisms and production systems being employed by transnational firms that are the effecting variables in the development of urban centers which create and perpetuate inequity and marginalization of vulnerable populations. Thus, global firms are a responsible actor in the creation of economic, political and social conditions which marginalize certain populations operating as part of the production system of global cities and globalized networks.

Outsourcing is a prime structural component of the integrated production systems of globalized firms that facilitate inequitable labor practices. Outsourcing facilitates opportunity for mistreatment of workers, because by transferring direct production responsibilities to a local provider, transnational corporations have less direct contact with workers and can more effectively argue that they lack the ability to control labor practices. Outsourcing to third-party labor managers is both structural joist and an undermining factor in the function of the globalized city. Outsourcing allows the global firm to disconnect

from the localities which most fundamentally support its operation. Outsourcing creates a paradigm by which transnational corporations can negate their own trans-local impact and their responsibilities to the communities which provide labor.

Over the past twenty years, Nike has become a prominent emblem of the negative labor practices of transnational corporations. Throughout the 1990s, the “sweatshop” labor activist movement worked to expose the relationship of direct jurisdiction that Nike had the power to enforce at its factory sites. For much of the 1990s, Nike tried to avoid its supervisory responsibility for factory conditions by saying they were “just the buyer” from third-party production contractors. For activists, Nike’s excuses have been unacceptable, and activists have very publicly attempted to force the company to take responsibility for the working conditions of the people who manufacture their products abroad.

As social responsibility issues have become increasingly international, transnational activist networks have played a significant role in bringing

together policymakers, experts, non-governmental organizations, and concerned citizen-activists around shared principles and values across nation-state boundaries. These cross-border political exchanges helped activists create new movement frames, transnational identities and coalitions through which to effectively and efficiently inform and carry out labor reform movements.

The activist labor reform campaign called upon Nike to improve working conditions at its factory sites worldwide. Operating within the framework of reforming corporate practices and corporate responsibility, the “Just Don’t Do It” campaign (a play on Nike’s own “Just Do It” advertising slogan), an institutional boycott of Nike products at the University of Michigan, made the following demands:

- Nike should pay workers a living wage, rather than wages based on mandatory overtime;
- Nike should promote working conditions which are consistent with human rights;
- Nike should reform its corporate structure so that factory subcontractors are required to allow

Niketown, New York. Site of 1996 protests against factory conditions in Southeast Asia. In 2009, the store sold merchandise from over fifteen countries, the vast majority located in Asia.



Photo: Andrea Marpillero-Colomina, 2009

workers the freedom to join a union and engage in collective bargaining;

- Nike should permit independent monitoring of working conditions by local human rights organizations; and
- Nike should work with its factory subcontractors to allow the redress of claims by workers fired for protesting working conditions.

As a response to the New York Niketown protest, Nike launched an aggressive counter-campaign to the accusations levied by activists. This was most fundamentally an effort to reassure consumers that Nike was a company that deserved continued customer loyalty.

As a component of this campaign, Nike produced newspaper advertisements, letters to editors and correspondence with college and university presidents which responded to sweatshop allegations and broadly denied the exploitation of its workers. Nike sought to portray the company as a leader in corporate responsibility, taking steps to establish and maintain adequate labor standards in its facilities outside of the United States. Nike sought to refocus the emphasis of its transnational identity toward its supposed social responsibility and reform efforts. The nurturing and development of this new transnationally-aware identity was for the sake of consumer retention, an appeal to the more socially-aware consumers within its massive customer base. Nike has attempted to reformulate its identity as a transnational corporation from transnational imperialist to transnational ethicist. This communications campaign was the first time Nike sought to represent itself as an aware and ethically inclined entity, a voice of conscience within the community, albeit consumerist-driven.

In the longer term, Nike has reexamined its labor practices and taken an active planning and programmatic development role in the communities where its factories are located. Since the end of the 1990s, Nike has made a commitment to developing initiatives that address child labor, among other contentious issues, which led the company to question the ethics of its labor practices. Its commitment of resources, financial and otherwise, in collaboration with local NGOs as well as global retail organizations

like the World Federation of the Sporting Goods Industry, which includes Nike, Adidas, Reebok, New Balance and Puma, demonstrates that Nike is at the forefront of an emerging transnational dialogue that addresses questions of fair trade and ethical production. The formation of these alliances represents the gains Nike is making in terms of forming a multimodal framework within which to address both macro- and micro-level corporate responsibility issues.

In both the U.S. and abroad, Nike has taken steps to modify its corporate organizational structure to address activist demands. As one of the most publicized examples of a “bad” transnational corporation, Nike has tried to improve its reputation by making drastic structural reforms to its corporate operations. Through development of holistic location-based programming aimed not just at improving working conditions but raising the overall quality of life for its employees, Nike has sought to demonstrate its commitment to the communities where its factories are located.

As multi-sited ethnographic research on commodity chains has demonstrated, however, assessing the impact of stated reforms depends on place-based analyses because standardized reforms produce anything but standardized effects, as reforms are mediated by specific place-based and socio-cultural economic conditions. Rothenberg-Aalami’s 2005 study (*Global Networks*, Volume 4, No. 4) of Nike’s factory sites, for instance, uncovered how the company’s reforms are mediated by the variety of corporate cultures and power relations that determine how networking occurs in different places; by the reinterpretation of national and regional policies by local leaders at sites of production; and by the fact that different conditions for labor exist within the same factories. This makes manifest the need to assess complex place-based labor conditions more carefully so that reforms to improve conditions for different places and groups of workers can be better tailored and hence, more effective and sustainable at redressing injustices.

The Safety, Health, Attitude, People, and Environment (SHAPE) Program is a wellness initiative which Nike has developed for universal

implementation at its factory sites around the world. The purported objectives of this integrative program are the implementation of safety standards at all factory sites, mandated regular breaks for employees and a recalibration of managerial oversight from disconnected and tyrannical to engaged and humane. The public announcement of this initiative is in tandem with Nike's goal to transform its perceived identity from cold-hearted corporation to community interventionist.

The Nike Village Development Project (NVDP) is a two-phase project which began in 1999 in the Nakhon Ratchasima Province of the Chakkarat District in Thailand, about 250 kilometers north of Bangkok. This project is the prime example of Nike's role as planner instituting community development initiatives. The project was set up with Nike financing and with the cooperation of its factory site contractor, Union Footwear, to expand local economic opportunities in the surrounding villages. In the first phase of the NVDP (from 1999-2002), Nike provided funding for the development of school scholarships, school lunch programs, women's rights program initiatives, tree plantings and community vegetable gardens (also called vegetable banks for their revenue-generating value). In the second phase (from 2003-2006), Nike continued funding school scholarships, school lunch programs and women's rights initiatives, and began funding initiatives for HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment, environmental restoration and community farming. The NVDP integrates all of Nike's strategies to reformulate its identity and operational structure and introduce programmatic and planning reforms which demonstrate its role at the forefront of corporate reform.

Nike's corporate responsibility agenda now extends and is manifested within both labor policy and physical environment-based planning issues. Despite the corporation's initial denials of wrongdoing and perhaps preemptory claims of change, Nike has taken notable action in the long run. The establishment of the Committee on Ethics and Fair Trade (CEFT) to carry out independent monitoring and reporting on child labor demonstrates Nike's response to allegations of unethical business practices. Likewise,

the development of infrastructure needed "for responsible production" represents the physical planning counterpart to the policy agenda.

Responding to the decade-long activist campaign protesting its unjust labor practices, the world's largest athletic footwear and apparel corporation has redirected and expanded its capacity to reform labor practices and assume a physical and economic planning role in communities where its factories are located. The programs that Nike has cultivated demonstrate that the corporation has expanded its role as planner in order to protect its image and to continue operating through its transnational export-based production model while effectively retaining its primary focus on its global brand power, product development and retail. The majority of its production operations remain unchanged, but Nike has reimagineered itself from apparel producer to multi-dynamic planner in order to compete in today's borderless capitalism. In this light, Nike is the ultimate transnational planner.

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Lithium in Bolivia: *Achieving Both Sovereignty and Development?*

by Greg Contente

Bolivia, which sits on the world's largest lithium deposits, is about to open its first export-ready lithium mines. The South American nation is positioning itself to take advantage of the explosive growth in demand for the lightweight metal, which is used in the batteries of electric and hybrid cars, cell phones, laptops and other gadgets. Bloomberg Financial projects lithium-ion car battery sales alone will become a \$100 billion a year industry in the next decade.

Bolivia's history, rooted in silver, tin and gas exports, has a strong undercurrent of exploitation of people and resources by foreign powers. With lithium mining, the country is aggressively planning to ensure benefits go directly to the Bolivian people—an ambitious goal, but one the socialist government fully intends to implement.

Rapid industrialization and the swift completion of necessary infrastructure are critical to Bolivia being able to meet growing global lithium demand. This includes lithium evaporates processing plants and development of ancillary industries, as well as the highways, pipelines, electric power and other infrastructure needed to extract the deposits and transport the metal from the isolated processing plants. Bolivia talks of building permanent infrastructure that will enable the lithium industry and continue to service the region when resources run dry. Transnational companies are flooding into Bolivia to discuss possible joint ventures with the government, even in the face of Bolivia nationalizing similar industries. While the current administration balances foreign pressures and national interest, Bolivia is taking center stage as a possible New World leader in battery power.

A Brief History

Bolivia has exported raw materials since the 1500s, when the Spanish enslaved the local populace to

mine silver. With a population of only nine million, the nation has the world's fourth largest tin reserves, is Latin America's second largest natural gas producer and possesses more than half of global lithium deposits.

Forty years ago, Bolivia first discovered lithium under its dried desert ocean floors in the Potosí Province. Under these majestic salt flats, the most accessible lithium reserves come from the brine buried beneath ancient seabeds. The Bolivian government declared the lithium a "fiscal reserve" and elected to sit on this potential wealth, as high costs made extraction not economically feasible. Since then, uses for lithium and subsequent demand have grown. The transnational Lithium Corporation (Lithco) attempted to purchase rights to the Andean lithium reserves in the 1990s. Lithco's business plan involved the mining and quick exportation of the metal, with value-added processing to take place in U.S. facilities. After Lithco demanded tax havens and environmental deregulation of Bolivia's prized salt flats, and in response to strong political pressure from Potosí, opponents convinced then President Jaime Paz Zamora to walk away from the Lithco contract. The vast salt flats remained untouched.

In 2005, Bolivia elected its first indigenous president, Evo Morales. On a platform of wealth redistribution and land reform, Morales nationalized the gas industry. His anti-imperialist, socialist policies discourage private investment. With growing world market demand, Morales reopened lithium-mining discussions, this time with promises of 100 percent state-owned facilities and visions of value-added domestic processing; the administration pledges to refuse the export of raw materials.

Mountainous Obstacles

Chile and Argentina also have salt flats with large lithium deposits and are currently top world exporters. Chile, a strong proponent of neoliberal market economics, sold its reserves to two multinational companies, Soquimich and Rockwood Holdings. These firms trade raw lithium on Chinese and U.S. stock exchanges. Argentina recently struck deals with Toyota and Mitsubishi. Toyota's deal includes a \$120 million investment and requires the carmaker to open domestic factories for secondary products, like battery manufacturing. Unlike their Chilean counterparts who trade lithium on public exchanges, Argentina's partners are mining lithium to fulfil their own integrated supply requirements. While batteries currently account for only 30 percent of global lithium demand, the trend of the largest lithium buyers mining their own supplies will surely redefine the industry's future market structure.

Bolivia faces a more complex landscape and business model than its southern neighbors. The landlocked country is stuck in the middle of the Andes. Transportation costs will be excruciatingly high. To reach the nearest seaports, Bolivians must cross into Chile to access the Pacific Ocean. Existing highways are poorly maintained, and no direct land route through Bolivia connects the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans.

Despite these challenges, Bolivia has a rich history of mining and exporting. While it currently lacks transportation infrastructure, it has cheap labor

(due to a weak currency) and centuries of expertise in mining and exporting. With benefits from government ownership, domestic tax reserves could help overcome high transportation costs. Sweeping control of all nine Bolivian salt flats and over half the world's reserves could advantage the nation with massive economies of scale.

Officials downplay notions that government-owned businesses don't face competitive market forces. Bolivia still has to compete globally with transnationals operating in Chile, Argentina and China. Even though Bolivia has a recent history of nationalizing oil, gas and other mining activities, private companies still flock to negotiation tables for exclusive mining rights to the salt flats. If foreign firms are willing to take on risks associated with uncertain socialist government action, they must believe in the profitable extraction of lithium.

Surprisingly, it is not socialism that is slowing lithium exploitation. The central government created an independent, state-owned enterprise to run the lithium project and to coordinate infrastructure planning. Consolidating a bureaucratic mess involving at least five ministries, the cabinet created the Strategic Evaporates Resources Company of Bolivia (known by its Spanish acronym, EBRE). With autonomy and a broad mandate, EBRE assumed sole responsibility for extracting and processing the lithium and for petitioning for regional development infrastructure projects. Unfortunately, political infighting led to the dismantling of EBRE. Government officials had expected to grant Potosí a 25 percent share of tax

Photo by Greg Contente



LEFT: Emblem on the outside of the Mining Corporation of Bolivia (COMIBOL) office building

revenue from the lithium project, but rather than work within the EBRE framework, Potosí attempted to seize full control of the venture. Protests led to constitutional challenges that voided the autonomous EBRE. The government Mining Corporation of Bolivia (COMIBOL) once again controls the evaporates plants, and infrastructure planning authority has been bureaucratically spread among multiple ministries.

Phase One: The Pilot Project

Bolivia is currently working on the first phase of industrial development, a pilot project trial processing plant. Since each salt flat across the world has different consistencies of lithium and other mineral deposits, exploiting the metal is a delicate science. With an initial \$8.4 million investment, Bolivia uses the small site with fourteen initial evaporate pools to master the individualized extraction process and to define the industrial needs of expanded operations. Still, the planning team is withholding regional planning recommendations until it can determine the areas of most dire need.

Officials emphasize Bolivia's baby-steps approach to avoid rushed, costly mistakes. Discouragingly, plans for the potential influx of migrants into the region have yet to make the list of priorities. This utter lack of concern for regional planning echoes through the uncoordinated government departments. With an apparent disconnect between government agencies, finger-pointing and presumptions of other ministers assuming responsibility for plans leaves migration concerns ignored.



Phase Two: Infrastructure Industrialization

By the end of the year, COMIBOL expects to gradually start exporting its first batches of lithium carbonate and potassium chloride. At this point, the government will start a full push towards industrialization. Phase two will begin with preliminary outlines of the industry's needs, followed by building a chemical refining plant for secondary products and petitioning the central government to construct infrastructure to support export. According to COMIBOL, the costs of industrialization are expected to range from \$300 to \$350 million, and this only includes direct investments in lithium plants, ignoring the possible \$1 billion regional infrastructure costs to be undertaken by other national departments.

Even though lithium officials deny any firm plans, Bolivia recently unveiled a five-year plan for nationwide public investment. A two hundred kilometer water pipeline from Camargo to Rio Grande is the only project already in the works. Funds for speedways between Uyuni and Huancarani and between Uyuni and Potosí have been delegated. The creation of these highways will finally complete the anticipated Atlantic-Pacific corridor, which for its own separate transportation purposes should provide Silk Road-reminiscent economic stimulus. One hundred and fifty kilometers of electrical lines still need to connect the processing plants to the electrical grid in Punutuma. Additionally, proposals for a gas pipeline could re-circulate funds with contracts to the government-owned natural gas and oil company. And, although it has yet to be engineered, a railway connecting Bolivia's hidden salt flats to Chile's Pacific seaports must be developed. While these proposals



All photos by Greg Contente

address much needed infrastructure, definitive plans for most of these projects have yet to materialize. As administrative leadership constantly changes hands and funding figures morph, the resulting lack of ministerial coordination suppresses progress.

Phase Three: Value-Added Manufacturing

With a firm stance that the lithium industry will be entirely state-owned and operated, Bolivia acknowledges its own production capabilities and shortfalls. The country has yet to officially rule out private investment as a source of funding advanced, phase three value-added processing. Transnational firms, importing new technologies and educated experts, could aid long-term hopes of increasing Bolivian human capital and productivity. Talks with Italian scientists to organize an “open technology exchange” are underway. Ultimately, to ensure value-added factory production stays within its borders, Bolivia needs to conjure further public or private investment. With the potentially high costs (both monetary and personnel) of phase three industrialization, the lithium team remains unsure of what lithium-ion battery manufacturing will remain under state control. President Morales promises “100 percent Bolivian-run, value-added production.” But Morales has also admitted that Bolivia only possess the technology to export refined metal compounds, not the complex science know-how to manufacture the lucrative batteries. Morales regularly entertains proposals from potential transnational investors and financiers. Phase three industrialization is set to launch in 2014, when future political climates and financial constraints will dictate progress.

FAR LEFT: Salt Pyramids, Salar de Uyuni, Potosí Province, Bolivia

NEAR LEFT: Investigating the Salt Flats, Salar de Uyuni, Potosí Province

Unplanned Expansion

Two decades ago, Bolivia’s petrol capital, Santa Cruz, exploded with natural gas wealth. Without definitive zoning plans, Santa Cruz sprouted bands of unpaved roads in unorganized concentric rings, like a growing tree stump marking each passing year. Small enclaves of rich housing developments litter the otherwise unplanned city. Planning and coordination are costly endeavors that require large amounts of cash, people and resources, not to mention political cohesion. Even with all the natural gas revenues, Santa Cruz failed to spread the wealth, and income gaps and crime rates there are among Bolivia’s highest. Only roads in the original center and along the spokes and the rings circling the city are paved.

With a burst of economic growth and exploding migration, cities in the Potosí Province are at risk of a fate similar to Santa Cruz. While local citizens hope to reap the benefits of rapid industrialization, amidst paralyzing political infighting, it remains unclear who will be directly financed with lithium riches. Plans to facilitate trickle-down wealth have yet to be constructed. Micromanagement is not even an afterthought while ministerial leadership gets sorted out. Even once administrative power is established, will the prevailing laissez-faire outlook on regional planning hinder economic growth prospects? In Santa Cruz, the rich have benefited from the void filled by private development, while the impoverished majority suffers from unpaved roads, which halt all commerce during the rainy season when dirt roads become unusable. The benefits of centralized planning can easily outweigh the costs, with strong zoning laws properly facilitating city expansion and continued prosperity.

President Morales claims that “industrialization of a raw material is wealth, is dignity and is sovereignty.” Time will tell if national pride creates Saudi-like riches and dignity for South America’s second poorest country. With Morales primarily concerned with creating a “100 percent state-run enterprise” and not regional plans, the only certainty at this point is that lithium will create Bolivian sovereignty.

Greg Contente specializes in Latin American development. He currently resides in Bolivia.

Planners Network Calls on Planners to Resist the Odious Arizona Immigration Law

As progressive planners who are committed to opposing social injustice and discrimination, we strongly condemn the Arizona immigration law (SB 1070). The law, which requires police officers to establish the resident status or citizenship of individuals deemed “reasonably suspicious” opens the door to racial profiling and threatens the basic civil liberties of all ethnic minorities in Arizona. As already noted by President Obama and other public officials, the law will breed mistrust between local law enforcement officials and local communities and it will instill fear and insecurity among the hundreds of thousands of undocumented immigrants who reside and work in the state.

Furthermore, by making it illegal to provide sanctuary to immigrants or to hire and transport day workers, this law is an affront to the extraordinary contributions and sacrifices that immigrants have made – and continue to make - to the social, cultural and economic fabric of the country.

We call on all urban and regional planners to protest this law as an attack on the human rights and dignity of immigrants and people of color and to argue instead for passing comprehensive immigration reform measures that extend basic civil liberties and services to all individuals who reside and/or work in the state, irrespective of status. Planners should also be at the forefront in supporting local efforts to plan inclusive communities and public spaces that enable people of diverse backgrounds to live and work together.

Since other states may follow Arizona’s lead, it is critical that we actively oppose the law. We call on citizens at large to join in economic boycotts of the state in order to send a clear message that an attack on immigrants is an attack on an all of us.

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Two World Urban Forums, Two Worlds Apart

by *Peter Marcuse*

Two major world forums focused on urban issues—the U.N.-sponsored World Urban Forum (WUF) and a social-movement-sponsored Social Urban Forum (SUF)—took place in Rio de Janeiro in the last week of March, 2010. The forums were extremely different, almost existing in two different worlds, but they tolerated each other; the contrasts and similarities were striking.

In its own words, the World Urban Forum

...was established by the United Nations to examine one of the most pressing problems facing the world today: rapid urbanization and its impact on communities, cities, economies, climate change and policies.

It brings together government leaders, ministers, mayors, diplomats, members of national, regional and international associations of local governments, non-governmental and community organizations, professionals, academics, grassroots women's organizations, youth and slum dwellers groups as partners working for better cities.

The theme for Rio 2010, *The Right to the City - Bridging the Urban Divide*, is in harmony with U.N.-HABITAT's flagship report, *State of the World's Cities 2010-2011*.

The theme sounds very socially-oriented indeed, and the report it references is a gold mine of data on urbanization around the world today.

In its own words, the Social Urban Forum

took place in a nearby venue, with a similar time schedule and with a similar array of debates around urban issues, also focused on urban poverty and the environment. The

SUF gathered social movements, networks and civil society organizations around the world to share their experiences and express their concerns on the collective construction of a different perspective of the city through dialogue, expression of diversity and the strengthening of social movements and organizations' articulations around the globe.

The WUF was, of course, much better funded, and claimed perhaps 13,000 attendees. At the WUF, present were Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, Brazil's president; Ana Tibaijuka, director of U.N.-HABITAT; Shaun Donovan, secretary, Housing and Urban Development (HUD); Ron Sims, deputy HUD secretary; Esther Brimmer, assistant secretary of state; Adolfo Carrion, director of the White House Office of Urban Affairs; and Judith Rodin, president of the Rockefeller Foundation. The language was overwhelmingly English, with simultaneous translation.

At the SUF, at various larger meetings, over 1,000 may have been present. The call to it came from Social Movements and Organizations of Rio de Janeiro, including many favela-based groups, advocacy organizations and a significant number

RIGHT: U.S. Secretary of State and Brazilian President Luiz Inacio da Silva at the World Urban Forum.

FAR RIGHT: Brazilian activists present closing statement at the Social Urban Forum

of African and other developing countries groups; many had booths at the giant warehouse space the SUF had rented. The language was overwhelmingly Portuguese; at major sessions, simultaneous translation was provided.

At both events, the talk was extensively of poverty, inequality, the divide between rich and poor and measures to address those issues. Each forum was overtly tolerant of the other, and accepted the existence and legitimacy of the other, with disagreements civilized rather than confrontational.

The contrasts between the ideological content of the two forums was sharp. To highlight some:

- At one of the “Dialogues” at the WUF, David Harvey spoke of and traced the economic problems of poverty and inequality to capitalism and the operations of the market, suggesting that the market as practiced had failed and needed to be replaced. The moderator, Neil Pierce, a respected urban journalist from Washington, D.C., asked whether the market was, nevertheless, inescapable as a way of allocating resources and motivating economic activity. Harvey pointed out that, judging by its results, the market didn’t do a good job of it, and most people in fact found the motivation for their actions outside of the market. Pierce simply shook his head in disbelief. The desirability/inevitability of capitalism was a foundational belief at the WUF; not so at the SUF, where it was often called into question.
- Issues of poverty, homelessness, insecurity and disease were major topics at both forums.

At the WUF, these were documented, measured, graphed and displayed in powerpoint slides, and the difficulties of measurement and the quality of indicators were often discussed. At the SUF, these issues were narrated as part of daily experience, and their ubiquity was simply assumed, with little interest in measurement or indicators. Even more striking, the discussion in both places was limited to the condition of the poor, rather than their relationship to the activities of the rich (perhaps a limitation of some progressive planning also). But, at the WUF, the poor were dealt with as the objects, the beneficiaries of the policies there debated; inequalities in the distribution of goods was often referred to, inequalities of power rarely. At the SUF, the poor and their movements were the subjects of concern, the actors whose ideas and struggles for increased power were the key issues to be addressed.

- The Right to the City as a slogan was in the heading of the call to the WUF, and the words were frequently used in the SUF as well. But the content was quite different. For most at the WUF, the Right to the City was at best a laundry list of goals to be achieved by better designed, managed and targeted policies. At the SUF, its content was much more radical—a demand for an alternative organization of the city, one in which not only the laundry-list items would be achieved, but the whole organization of the society gave priority to the well-being of all of its members. Bridging the Gap, in the call for the WUF, was there seen as moving the poor a little closer to those above them; in the SUF,



Photo courtesy of Social Urban Forum

it was rather eradicating the distinction between above and below.

- “Best practices” were a mantra at the WUF, barely mentioned at the SUF. Best practices, after all, result from a survey of what is now being done, of the existing practices of existing cities. The vision of the SUF is oriented to deal with immediate problems, with what exists today, but goes beyond these. Thus, utopias were a topic of discussion there, in the sense not of something impossible, but of something to be pursued, something necessary, something toward which the existing needed to be turned.

The relationship of mutual recognition between the two forums raises interesting questions of strategy for progressives concerned about the shortcomings

of liberal approaches to problems of social justice. Sometimes confrontation and sharp criticism are appropriate; at other times, cooperation on immediate actions, even if with different long-term perspectives, is productive. On the last day of both forums, an informal committee of activists from Brazilian social movements presented a statement at the SUF which was explicit in the radicalism of its analysis and goals, and it was adopted at a well-attended general session at the SUF’s great rented space. The text can be found at <http://www.choike.org/2009/eng/informes/7826.html>, and it is well worth a close look. It concludes with the call for a further meeting of the SUF paralleling the next meeting of the WUF in two years. It will be interesting to see what happens to this forum of movements in the

meantime; it is worthy of international support.

Peter Marcuse is a professor of urban planning emeritus in the School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation at Columbia University. He spoke at both the World Urban Forum and the Social Urban Forum. For more information, see Marcuse’s chapter “Rights in Cities and the Right to the City?” in Ana Sugranyes and Charlotte Mathivet (eds.), 2010, Cities for All: Proposals and Experiences towards the Right to the City, also available at <http://www.hic-net.org/content/Cities%20for%20All-ENG.pdf>.



Photo courtesy of Social Urban Forum

RIGHT: Social Urban Forum meeting space

Smart Decline and Planning Ideology

by Aaron McKeon

Last September, *Time* began a year of coverage of Detroit. Judging by the coverage in the September issue and subsequent installations online, the magazine's angle is to present the nation's eleventh largest city as all but a lost cause. Naturally, there is a lot of heart and guts in the city and plenty of determined people working for its survival, but *Time* seems to be asking the question, Aren't they just rearranging the deck chairs?

The introduction to a year of stories on Detroit in the September issue includes a broad land use recommendation:

For its part, Detroit must address the fact that a 138-square-mile city that once accommodated 1.85 million people is way too large for the 912,000 who remain. The fire, police and sanitation departments couldn't efficiently service the yawning stretches of barely inhabited areas even if the city could afford to maintain those operations at their former size. Detroit has to shrink its footprint, even if it means condemning decent houses in the gap-toothed areas and moving their occupants to compact

neighborhoods where they might find a modicum of security and service. Build greenbelts, which are a lot cheaper to maintain than untraveled streets. Encourage urban farming. Let the barren areas revert to nature.

This article did not use the terminology "smart decline" or "planned shrinkage," but that is the tradition being invoked. Like a lot of coverage of so-called "shrinking cities," this framing of the situation uses the magnitude of the numbers to make the dismantling of the city seem like a *fait accompli* and the only logical way to proceed.

David Harvey, writing more than thirty years ago, warned of oscillations in planning ideology that would give this kind of thinking a great deal of appeal to planners. Harvey was writing at a time when New York City's Housing and Development administrator, Roger Starr, was advocating the "planned shrinkage" of places that were thought to be too far gone, like the South Bronx.

The thinking was that some neighborhoods could not be "turned around" and that it was a misuse of public funds to keep health clinics, fire departments

and other city services operating there. Inhumane as this sounds, Harvey suggests that this is not a completely crazy endpoint for a planning ideology whose central aim is to ensure that the built environment nurtures the "reproduction of the social order." Harvey's 1978 article *On Planning the Ideology of Planning* states:

If the problem lies in lack or excess of investment in the built environment then the planner must perforce set to work to stimulate investment or to manage and 'rationalize' devaluation with techniques of 'planned shrinkage,' urban renewal and even the production of 'planning blight' (which amounts to nothing more than earmarking certain areas for devaluation).

Harvey's point is that when planning's underlying objective is to make sure that a place is appealing to capital, anything can seem like a good idea. In cities like Detroit, Buffalo, Flint, Philadelphia and Youngstown, politicians and neighbors alike are clamoring for funds for the demolition and/or deconstruction of homes. Districts within these cities squabble over demolition funds.

The new dream for these cities is that the neighborhoods most heavily pockmarked by vacancies and abandonment can revert to use for agriculture, stormwater retention, wetland creation or some other beneficial, quasi-greenfield function.

One of the ironic aspects of this trend is that its advocates toss around the word “sustainability” to justify it, when it represents a commitment to shifting away from dense, walkable land use patterns and sunk investments like roads and sewer systems. As the city is “greened,” commuters working in the central business district drive farther and farther to get to homes in the exurbs that break up natural habitat and disrupt agricultural activities.

The term “smart decline” was coined by Deborah and Frank Popper in their 2002 article in *Planning* entitled “Small Can Be Beautiful.” It was picked up by the City of Youngstown when planners there began thinking about the city’s 2010 plan. The Poppers suggest a paradigm shift—away from planning for growth and toward thinking about what a city with shrinking resources could safely jettison. In Youngstown, this has been rolled into a plan to tug people out of some neighborhoods using a combination of carrots and sticks. If you live in a “targeted” neighborhood, your home is not eligible for certain city home improvement grants and you are eligible for \$50,000 to relocate into another neighborhood.

The Youngstown 2010 Plan was, by all accounts, done as well as it could be. The plan has a broad base of support. Residents and many activists are upbeat about possible benefits, including the deconstruction of homes rather than demolition, with building materials being salvaged and reused whenever possible. Finding and/or growing local construction crews that can do this kind of deconstruction work may be a new growth industry in cities like Youngstown. Similarly appealing is the prospect of teaching kids how to turn vacant acreage into commercially successful urban farms or woodlots.

Youngstown’s plan has hit snags though. People are not moving out of their neighborhoods voluntarily in large numbers. Demolitions are happening at a faster pace but tend to be fairly piecemeal, not creating large swaths of green space, as was intended.

Whether or not the plan is “successful” in terms of achieving its own stated goals and objectives, the Youngstown 2010 Plan has done two important things: it has signaled to local owners of capital that community resources will be used to subsidize their interests, not those of the worst off in the city, and it has set a precedent for the rest of the Rust Belt. The mayor of Flint, Michigan, was quoted last March as saying that he might support “shutting down quadrants of the city.”

What has not been seriously considered is a program to turn the “smart decline” idea around and use it to achieve real sustainability. Looked at regionally, it would be substantially more efficient, and a greater saving of public dollars, to target “smart decline” policies at the edge of development and provide vouchers for suburban residents to relocate within cities. If the goal were truly efficiency, rather than slum clearance, the demolition would be going on in the exurbs.

While it will be a long time before wholesale demolition of McMansions is politically palatable, an interesting variation on this paradigm is being tested in Syracuse, New York. There, a collaboration between Syracuse University, the Syracuse City School District and the Say Yes to Education Foundation has resulted in a program to give every graduate of the City school district free tuition at Syracuse University and a number of other colleges.

The Say Yes to Education Program amounts to a carrot of gigantic proportions (at least \$120,000) to move into the school district and, per the terms of the program, keep a student there for the three years prior to graduation. Last fall, the city’s ailing district saw a nearly two percent increase in enrollment, while nearly all other nearby districts lost students.

The real problem with talking about population loss as a

citywide problem is that it draws attention away from the fact that the issues related to population loss involve neighbors and neighborhoods. From city hall's perspective, the first principle should be to prize every neighborhood in the same way that its residents do. A string of vacant homes on a block looks like a problem waiting for a solution to a planner conducting a windshield survey, but each

home has its own history and its place within the neighborhood's fabric.

At the same time, it would be foolish to suggest that every vacant home can be rehabilitated or that vacant buildings are not magnets for crime. Frequently it is neighbors who are clamoring for the demolition of what they consider to be nuisance properties. And, to the extent that residents within

a neighborhood are pursuing the removal of some structures, there may be some value in thinking strategically about the long-term implications of these demolitions. But a neighborhood of gardens and stormwater retention ponds has its own issues in terms of the services and lifestyle it can offer its residents.

Aaron McKeon is a planner and GIS analyst living in Syracuse, NY.

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Los Angeles Throws its General Plan Overboard as the Ship Goes Down

by Richard Platkin

The *Los Angeles Times* (March 1 and March 14, 2010), Southern California's rapidly shrinking, former newspaper of record, repeatedly complains that Los Angeles's elected officials, primarily Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa and the fifteen members of the Los Angeles City Council, do not have a plan to guide them in their massive, highly selective cutbacks in municipal services, layoffs of public employees and increases in resident fees for city services.

It is too bad that the editorial staff of the *LA Times* has not bothered to read its own newspaper. If they had, they would know that LA's elected officials have two plans before them, and they are carefully following one of them. They would also know that similar plans are being implemented at the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD), not far down the street from City Hall. Its budget is as large as the city's, but its budget deficit is even larger (\$600 million vs. \$450 million), as is its layoff list (6,000 vs. 4,000 public employees). Likewise, like the State of California, LA's regional transit agency, the Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA), the Los Angeles Community College District and the MetroLink regional rail service are also facing massive budget deficits and responding to them with the same formula of cutbacks, layoffs and extra fees. The only difference between their plight and the city's is the extraordinary amount of pushback by students and teachers against budget cutbacks and fee increases. On March 4, 2010, rallies and marches that drew participants from across the state and from all levels of public education—K-12, community colleges and universities—were held.

The Los Angeles General Plan

One plan available to LA's elected officials, the Los Angeles General Plan, and especially its Framework Element, is required by state law and cost the city

millions of dollars to prepare in the early 1990s. The General Plan Framework Element was based on rigorous research, honed through several hundred public meetings and carefully reviewed, debated and legally adopted by the City Council and mayor in 1995. Despite the current ignorance of LA's largest newspaper, this plan forecast the city's growth and the infrastructure, housing and employment needs of a growing population and clearly identified the city's policies and priorities for the next two decades (1990 - 2010). But, shortly after the plan's formal adoption, the same elected officials, along with the Department of City Planning, dropped the plan like a hot potato.

The General Plan Framework Element became a shelf document, presumably for two reasons. First, in the era after LA's 1992 urban rebellion, the largest civil disturbance in the United States since the Civil War, policing became City Hall's only infrastructure priority. Since then every city politician, especially Mayor Villaraigosa, has been fixated on hiring more cops. Second, the General Plan Framework Element highlighted the city's broad infrastructure requirements and called for a rigorous monitoring system which could be used for reviewing real estate projects. In a city with the country's worst traffic, air and streets, the Framework's focus on infrastructure monitoring and infrastructure construction would have put a straightjacket on real estate speculation.

City Hall's decision to jettison the framework shortly after it was adopted was no different than parallel decisions in Washington during the 1990s to roll back financial regulations and enforcement in order to green-light riskier investments. This is why the framework has been totally ignored ever since by the city's elected officials, department managers and local press. The framework's horizon

year is 2010, meaning its empirical basis is about to expire and there are no known plans to update, rescind or replace it.

The Neoliberal “Race to the Bottom” Plan

Nevertheless, as LA’s city officials muddle through the “Great Recession,” they still have another plan to guide their cleavers in carving away vital municipal services and firing thousands of public employees. It is their neoliberal “Race to the Bottom” plan. The difference is that the Race to the Bottom Plan was never required by state law, openly researched, put in writing, debated, legally adopted or shared with the public. Nevertheless, the *LA Times* reports about this plan every day, including admonishing editorials and intricate details about the two teams competing with each other over the best way to reach bottom.

So what is the Race to the Bottom plan, who are the two teams competing to implement it and what are their differences? In one corner is Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa, the California chair of Hillary Clinton’s presidential campaign, then Barack Obama’s. He is backed by a majority of the largely Democratic City Council and guided by the city’s administrative officer, hatchet man Miguel Santana, as well as an in-house Wall Street banker, Austin Beutner. The latter’s illustrious pedigree includes high finance jobs at Smith Barney and the Blackstone Group, and a job at the U.S. State Department working to ensure the rebirth of market capitalism in Russia. The mayor also

has a cheering section from Wall Street’s three major bond rating companies. Their job, like the *LA Times*, is to stampede the City Council whenever it takes a breather in slicing and dicing city government’s non-police functions.

In the other corner are several members of the Los Angeles City Council. They are backed by most of the city’s employee unions and some neighborhood associations. So far this team’s greatest achievement has been to cut city programs from the top through the ERIP, a golden handshake program to retire 2,400 older employees. Otherwise, they call for shifting cuts to other city departments, contracting out slightly less municipal services and better scrutinizing the sell-off of city assets.

So, what is the mysterious Race to the Bottom plan on which these two teams agree? *So far* it has at least seventeen components, and counting.

- 1) Scrupulously make sure that there is absolutely no connection between the city’s feeble planning process and its even more feeble budgeting process.
- 2) Reduce the non-police role of city government by eliminating several civilian departments, shrinking many municipal programs and getting rid of thousands of career city employees in these “superfluous” offices. They are throwing overboard those civil servants who deal with cultural events, urban forestry, libraries, parks, environmental affairs,

View through the smog of Century City, Santa Monica Bay and Catalina Island from the Santa Monica Mountains.



Photo by Richard Plarkin

social services, code violations and neighborhood councils. So far the two teams reluctantly agreed to the early retirement program and are now preparing to fire 4,000 city employees, with the Los Angeles Police Department, of course, exempted from layoffs. While Los Angeles has had many smaller budget crises in recent decades, all associated with civilian hiring and pay freezes, this time the elected officials have really rolled up their sleeves. In the midst of a deep recession, these economic wizards want to slash public payrolls to make sure that the city's job losses keep up with those in the private sector.

3) Cut the hours and pay of remaining non-police employees by 10 percent through furloughs.

4) Reduce the power of public employee unions to organize labor actions, negotiate contracts, protect their members and set an example for private-sector workers in terms of salaries, benefits, job security and protection and retirement.

5) Increase the payroll deductions for remaining civilian employees.

6) Except for parking violations, minimize enforcement of the city's many laws, especially building and zoning codes.

7) Accelerate the processing of applications for building permits and related city planning land use "entitlements." To expedite these permits, the mayor deployed the head of his Business Team, Bud Ovrom, to become the new general manager of the city's Department of Building Safety.

8) Increase city revenues through jacked-up regressive fees on municipal services, such as electricity, water and garbage collection, as well as through enormous increases in the cost of parking meters and fines for traffic violations.

9) Offer truly enormous grants, cheap loans, fee waivers and subsidized public infrastructure to large real estate projects primarily paid for by the city's general fund, with smaller amounts from the city's Community Redevelopment Agency.

10) Avoid any analysis of the causes of the city's repeated budget crises in the past or at present, other than the current recession. Two decades of deferred infrastructure investments, as well as numerous hiring and promotion freezes, along with several rounds of smaller layoffs have, in effect, been ruled out-of-order.

11) Never call for any progressive taxes and never mention proposed reforms of Proposition 13, which, since its adoption in 1979, has cost state and local government dearly. Serious analysts know Proposition 13 has become a major tax dodge for commercial property. Nevertheless, it will continue to be a major backdoor subsidy for those who invest in commercial real estate in Los Angeles and the rest of California.

12) Maintain absolute silence on the long-term reductions in federal programs for cities since the Nixon administration, as well as in two expensive current federal programs for which the sky is the funding limit: the bailout of the banksters and the endless wars in Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan and probably Iran. When it comes to these extraordinarily expensive and illegal energy wars, both of City Hall's cutback teams have taken an oath of silence.

13) Lease or sell off moneymaking city assets, such as parking structures and parking meters.

14) Privatize more city services, such as computing, which will go to Google.

15) Defer investment in the city's infrastructure, even though Los Angeles sits on major earthquake faults and is subject to life-threatening floods and wildfires. The "Big One," a massive earthquake larger than 1992's Northridge earthquake, could happen at any moment, according to the U.S. Geological Service and FEMA, and yet City Hall has systematically avoided adequate infrastructure planning and investment since that late 1960s.

16) Erode public employee pensions by increasing deductions for remaining employees and discuss changes in retirement formulas, such as age requirements.

17) Join the corporate media by floating proposals to cut back civil service protection for city employees, especially when it comes to seniority and bumping rights during layoffs.

Viewed in the aggregate, the mayor and the City Council clearly have a plan, and its essence is to use the cover of a deep recession to institute many existing proposals, usually labeled “neoliberalism.” In the view of the think tanks and politicians, its intent is to make government more “business-friendly.” In more straight talk, it is “crony capitalism” or the use of taxpayer money to increase the short-term profits of private investors with political connections.

Although most of the pols don’t see it, there is a deeper method to their madness. They delude themselves with claims about imminent prosperity and that they are just pursuing short-term budget fixes until the U.S. economy recovers from a deep recession. Few of them realize that the U.S. economy, like the global economy, is in the midst of a deep, long-term financial crisis. Most of their cuts and layoffs are here to stay and will get worse as more components of their Race to the Bottom Plan are unveiled and implemented.

If an economic recovery eventually returns, it is not going to be used to raise the salaries and benefits of public employees, fortify pension funds, build libraries, plant trees and educate students. This is because, sadly, the decision-makers prefer to sacrifice most local government functions to pay for other government priorities, in particular real estate subsidies, corporate bailouts, military hardware and foreign wars.

Their plans to fill these enormous local gaps with such gimmicks as additional charter schools, high stakes testing, contracting out and privatization are nothing more than an unintended strategy to reach bottom. While the pols might actually believe in these schemes, or that cities like Los Angeles can function without adequate city plans, schools, libraries, parks, urban forests, cultural events, building inspectors, plan checkers and neighborhood groups, they are really diverting local public resources to support federal priorities.

There are some clear lessons to be learned from this debacle:

- 1) The slashing and burning of most local public services is a long-term trend, not just a blip resulting from the Great Recession.
- 2) Its purpose is not just to dish out public favors to well-connected investors who need a short-term boost in their bottom line through contracts or bailouts, but to martial public resources for other projects and programs.
- 3) So far, the public employee unions do not have an effective program to reverse these trends. They have yet to organize work actions to stop cutbacks and layoffs or form strong alliances with the public, the other victim of cutbacks. For the most part, the primary political strategy of the employee unions is to fund the campaigns of the very same politicians who are imposing furloughs and layoffs on their members.
- 4) Any solutions to this long-term crisis will come from the bottom up, not the top down. There are no politicians on the horizon capable of rectifying this situation, or economists with a magic formula to fill local government coffers in order to provide high-quality employment and public services. So far, students and teachers have taken the lead in direct actions, and they have provided a model for other public employees and the general public to form effective political alliances.

Richard Platkin (rhplatkin@yahoo.com) is a Los Angeles-based planning consultant and invites comments on this article.

The Progressive City:

Notes on Chicago and Harold Washington

by Pierre Clavel

For “progressive planners,” one of the ways to sustain vision is to examine cases of best practice. Prominent among such cases would be the progressive city, where not only city planners, but also city government and institutions, support goals like redistribution of wealth and open participation in important decisions.

Chicago during the mayoralty of Harold Washington, from 1983 until Washington’s sudden death in 1987, was such a case. Washington, the city’s first black mayor, was a reform mayor, implementing court orders to reduce patronage appointments, and, less remarked upon, redistributive policies through the appointment of community economic development activists to administrative posts.

“Jobs not Real Estate”

The central redistributive principle of Washington’s administration was the “jobs policy.” It had its origins in the burgeoning community development movement, whose activists saw manufacturing jobs as the key to many of the issues facing neighborhoods. By 1982, industrial retention had become a key issue. This came into focus in a community meeting in August 1982 called to craft a response to a Reaganite “enterprise zone” proposal that,

claiming to create jobs, would cut wages and regulations in designated inner-city areas. Rob Mier, a University of Illinois-Chicago professor who had been engaging community development activists, found himself facilitating the discussion on the floor. The proposal was drawing anger and negative comment, so Mier drew the audience into a proactive discussion. Economic development, the audience seemed to be saying, meant “jobs, not real estate.” There were other proposals, many of which resulted in the “platform” for the new Community Workshop on Economic Development (CWED). The “jobs not real estate” idea, or the “jobs goal” for short, turned out to have several lives. Washington adopted it for his campaign, fleshed out in a campaign document called *The Washington Papers*. Mier, who became commissioner of economic development, inserted the idea in two strategic plans. It was tested in a series of administrative initiatives over the next five years and elements survived into the 1990s.

Saving Steel Jobs

“Jobs, not real estate” meant—in the CWED Platform and *The Washington Papers*—stemming the loss of manufacturing jobs since, relative to service sector jobs, they paid more and were more likely to be union jobs. Real estate

meant downtown office towers and high-end residential and retail development, but low-end service sector jobs, less likely to be “good jobs,” that would buttress the city’s working-class neighborhoods. So the jobs goal was redistributive, at least holding the line against the inequality which, in the 1980s, was becoming a feature of the Chicago, and the U.S., economy.

Meanwhile, Chicago activists saw the alarming rate of factory closings within the city—27 percent of the city’s manufacturing jobs were lost between 1977 and 1982. Most spectacular was the loss of five large integrated steel mills near the city’s southeastern border. Washington had committed to create a “Task Force on Steel and Southeast Chicago” during the campaign, but when the task force began its work in 1985, there was general shock and pessimism at the sight of the massive, empty plants. The committee, laden with real estate-oriented businessmen, at first could see no future but to transform the site into lakefront condos. Mier and Washington countered by adding four “working groups” and by hiring Ann Markusen, a University of California economist, as staff director.

Markusen began with enthusiasm in January 1985 and spent the year researching steel, attending

almost every task force meeting and producing a 500-page report later that year. Her research supported these conclusions: 1) contrary to some opinions, including many within the industry, steel manufacturing was not a dying industry; 2) primary production of steel, which still employed over 7,000 workers in Southeast Chicago in 1983, was connected to a far greater group of suppliers and purchasers, including secondary producers of products like machinery and consumer durables, which employed 15,000 workers in Southeast Chicago, and nearly 300,000 workers in the region around Chicago; and 3) steel production, rather than dead, was still an opportunity—to the extent steel jobs could be saved, they would trigger a much larger savings in the greater

“steel industrial complex.” The task force could see the point.

The final aspect of Markusen’s argument was a survey of what might be done. There had been studies of steel production and decline in several different places, to which Markusen found three typical responses:

- “Bowing out,” i.e., giving up on steel production entirely, had been recommended by some business groups, including members of the steel industry;
- “Bidding down” the cost of doing business, particularly labor costs; and,
- “Building on the basics.”

Markusen, having eliminated or seriously undermined the arguments for “bowing out” or “bidding down,” chose to rec-

ommend city support for the maintenance of at least some steel production capacity.

In the end, the task force did not adopt the most dramatic recommendation suggested by Markusen’s findings—support for financing to keep at least one of the mills open. As she put it, “...it demurred from drawing the analogy between urban renewal, with its strong quasi-governmental development agencies and powers of eminent domain, and industrial renewal.” But in a recent comment, she stressed the positive results:

We made a large argument, inevitably, about the manufacturing economy in general, because some of steel’s problems were machinery and auto industry problems. You

Former Chicago Mayor Harold Washington and economic development commissioner Rob Mier in the mid-1980’s.



Photo by Antonio Dickey

cannot imagine how strong the pessimism was in those days, both on the part of workers and communities and on the part of economists and opinion-makers—they just thought steel was dead! Although the industry did retrench a lot in the 1980s, especially in Pittsburgh, Youngstown and other land-locked sites, it was far from fatally ill, and I think we made a big difference in the public case for manufacturing.

Secondary Effects: Reinforcing the Jobs Goal

The Steel Task Force did not re-open any of the five major mills that closed during the 1980s, but its discussions were a backdrop and support to other actions—coming from city hall and from neighborhood institutions—that countered at least some of the job losses in the manufacturing sectors. It reinforced the Department of Economic Development (DED) and Mier's bias towards "jobs, not real estate," and it had implications for city support for the retention of manufacturing sectors.

Some of the initiatives included city actions that could be implemented by executive order. Robert Giloth and Kari Moe report in a 1999 article that a 1985 executive order required that 25 percent of purchasing go to minority firms and 5 percent to women-owned firms—by 1987 the numbers were at 29 percent and 5.6 percent, respectively. Purchasing from local firms increased from 30 percent to 60 percent between 1983 and 1987, and there was an estimate that increasing this to 90 percent in the next term would create as many as 40,000 net new local jobs. And in the city labor force, hiring of African Americans went from 44 to 55 percent from 1980 to 1986, Hispanics from 8 to 12 percent and women from 27 to 41 percent.

One of the early initiatives was DED support of the Westside Jobs Network (WJN), created through contracts with the University of Illinois at Chicago's Center for Urban Economic Development (CUED) and the Midwest Center for Labor Research (MCLR). For both organizations, the goal was to anticipate shutdowns and layoffs in order to give the city and workers' families a chance to blunt the effects of job

loss and—best case—avert the shutdown altogether by means of buyouts and possibly city help. They found that reliance on management for information needed to be supplemented by community and labor sources, and for that an organized network was the key.

A longer term campaign with eventual results was for planned manufacturing districts (PMDs). This was a zoning measure that reversed the doctrine of "highest use" to favor manufacturing over competitive pressures from new residential and commercial development, for which there was increasing demand in an inner belt around Chicago's downtown Loop district. After the first PMD was established in 1988, there were two more in the 1990s, and eight in 2004-2005, for a total of thirteen. By 1992, Washington's long-term successor, Richard M. Daley, had appointed the grassroots initiator of the PMD idea, Donna Ducharme, as the chief industrial development officer and was supporting PMDs with planning, organizing and infrastructure measures, pressed on him by neighborhood organizations and manufacturers.

Reflections on Chicago's Economic Policy in the 1980s

It was remarkable that Chicago's progressive activists could put in place the redistributive and participatory reforms I have described. No other city had done anything comparable after the "progressive" period eighty to one hundred years earlier—city policies associated with the likes of Tom Johnson in Cleveland (1901-08) and Hazen Pingree in Detroit (1889-1996). How did this happen?

One factor is the long history of organizing in Chicago. Since at least the 1960s, blacks and liberals had chafed under the Chicago machine domination that was only beginning to fragment as Washington mounted his campaign. In addition, the community development movement, which had developed critical ties across race lines with "umbrella" organizations like CWED and the Chicago Rehab Network, developed its own sense of a coherent alternative policy as in the case of the CWED Platform of 1982. That the movement had support

and ties within Chicago universities, as in the case of CUED, was a critical element in the mix.

Going into government as DED Commissioner, Mier hired and supported community and labor people. His years as director of CUED had put him in touch with a wide variety of people who would later play roles within city hall, or play constructive outsider roles after the election: Kari Moe had worked in community-based alternative schools in Chicago's Uptown neighborhood; Robert Giloth had been executive director of the 18th Street Development Corporation; Arturo Vazquez had been working with community organizations in the Latino neighborhood of Pilsen; Stephen Alexander was a steelworker; Donna Ducharme had been a youth outreach worker at the New City YMCA before becoming the advocate who tirelessly pressed for the PMDs; and Dan Swinney had been a steel union organizer before organizing MCLR. One could name dozens of others.

But "progressives" were distinct from "organizers," whose Alinskyite origins often conflicted with business and government officials. By the time of Washington's run in 1983, significant elements of Chicago's neighborhood movement sought to transcend the oppositional mode, to enter and take over government. Doing this, they knew, would require them to make compromises. Mier, in a 1994 memoir, recounted many of these compromises, including in the case of the Steel Task Force, and some criticized him strongly for this. Mier felt the net results, however, were positive.

In addition, there is what I would call the "logic" argument. If support for the real estate "growth coalition" was the argument that manufacturing was dying, the Steel Task Force, while it could do nothing to reverse the closure of the five main mills in Southeast Chicago, was able to make a strong argument for the future of steel and manufacturing in general. That the city had a substantial labor base in that sector, and that hundreds of smaller manufacturers provided a basis for support, added weight when Markusen and others advocated saving the sector. The later success of the PMDs, and Ducharme's accession to the deputy

commissionership of planning and her support for industrial corridor studies and infrastructure improvements, was based on that in part.

The question people raise about "progressive cities" is what relevance they have for "normal cities." It is easy to deny relevance, because in cases like Chicago, there were not only specific innovations, but the political terrain was shaken fundamentally. But it follows that what we can learn about is not simply a few innovations, but also the larger process of political change. Thus, while Chicago was doing strategic planning, industrial retention, PMDs, executive orders and early warning systems, other things were happening as well. That "progressive planners" like Mier, Vazquez, Ducharme and Moe could make this happen has to be considered as an example for other activist planners in other places.

Pierre Clavel is professor of city and regional planning at Cornell University and is the author of The Progressive City: Planning and Participation, 1969-1984. This article is excerpted in part from Clavel's forthcoming book from Cornell Press, Activists in City Hall.

The Plight of Paid Mexican Gardeners in Los Angeles' Informal Economy

by Alvaro Huerta

The unregulated economy of paid Mexican gardeners in Los Angeles constitutes an important and underexamined component of the city's informal service sector. Paid Mexican gardeners, like Latina domestic workers (*domésticas*), represent a valuable labor source for the domestic household economy in this global city and beyond. While domestic help has historically been a privilege of the affluent, the middle class, especially after WWII, has also acquired the financial means to hire immigrants and racial minorities to perform traditional household duties. Due primarily to the American obsession with the front lawn, the influx of low-wage immigrants to U.S. cities since the mid-1960s and the shift from a manufacturing to a service economy, the demand for paid gardeners has become an integral part of local neighborhoods.

Although this informal niche provides positive benefits (e.g., greener, healthier and aesthetically pleasing communities), planning scholars and practitioners have traditionally ignored this group, both academically and professionally. Scholarly publications and popular narratives commonly frame Mexican workers, including paid gardeners, *domésticas* and others, as a homogenous group that occupies low-wage jobs associated with low social status. To address the shortcomings in the social science literature and debunk the pejorative views towards paid Mexican gardeners, planning scholars and practitioners need to pay more attention to this unregulated workforce and address the ills that plague those not protected from government regulations and legal protections. Moreover, scholars and practitioners need to re-examine this niche as a heterogeneous group (i.e., co-ethnic workers and entrepreneurs) and redefine these laborers as active agents who engage in complex social relations and sophisticated economic transactions in the informal

sector, not passive objects of ridicule who perform simplistic, labor-intensive activities.

Snapshot of Paid Gardening Niche

Paid gardeners primarily consist of two social classes: bosses (*patrones*) and workers (*trabajadores*). While the *patrón* is the owner of the small-scale enterprise and handles all paperwork and business transactions, the *trabajador* works for the *patrón*. As the owner, the *patrón* negotiates a yard maintenance agreement with a homeowner/renter (*cliente*). Instead of legally binding contracts, the *patrón* and *cliente* usually establish an oral agreement based on the size of the lot, type of work requested (e.g., mow lawn, water plants, trim bushes), frequency of visits and estimated time to complete job.

As independent contractors, *patrones* mostly charge *clientes* based on the nature of the job, as noted above, versus hourly work. *Patrones* would typically charge from \$75 to \$100 per month, however, due to an abundance of cheap labor and fierce competition among co-ethnics, paid gardeners' may charge as little as \$50 per month for landscape services.

Apart from monthly maintenance jobs, however, paid gardeners can earn well above these monthly rates by performing larger jobs, or "extras," such as installing sprinklers or trimming trees, for extra pay. These jobs are typically performed during the weekends, and both the *patrón* and *trabajador* benefit in monetary terms.

Gardeners organize themselves in small crews (see Figure 1). Depending on the size of the small enterprise, a crew can be from three to six members. Crews usually consist of the *patrón*, a few *trabajadores* and a driver (*manejador*). The *patrón* usually accesses

his social networks to hire workers, who typically include nuclear family members, extended family members (on both sides if he's married), friends and hometown associates.

The *patrón* also manages all aspects of the crew and business operations. In addition, the *patrón* owns all the tools, truck(s) and equipment (e.g., leaf blower, lawn mover and weed trimmer) and has direct contact with the *clientes*. Moreover, the *patrón* is responsible for covering all business costs, such as equipment maintenance and tool replacements, auto payments, insurance, gasoline and oil. The *patrón* is also responsible for hiring and paying his *trabajadores*. Contrary to the formal economy, where checks are the norm, the *patrón* usually pays the *trabajadores* in cash on a daily or weekly basis.

Apart from the *patrón* and *trabajador* positions, as noted above, crews also include a *manejador*. In addition to his driving duties, the *manejador* also takes on the duties of a *trabajador*. Given that an undocumented worker cannot legally obtain a driver's license in California—a trend that has extended to other states in the nation—the *manejador* has become a key part of the crew structure and usually gets paid more than the *trabajador*.

Lastly, the route (*ruta*) represents a network of houses, usually accumulated by the *patrón* over time. Like any commodity in the formal market, the *ruta* has exchange value: it can be sold, traded or gifted. Any exchange of *rutas* commonly takes place in the informal economy. The *ruta* represents a *patrón's* primary asset. Both the size and quality (amount being charged per house) of the *ruta* determines the *patrón's* monthly earnings (and profits) and how many *trabajadores* he can afford to employ.

The Pioneers: Japanese Immigrants

The history of Japanese immigrants and their descendents in the U.S. has been one of struggle, perseverance and triumph. During the late 1800s, Japanese immigrants arrived and settled in California and other key states. The Issei (first generation Japanese immigrants) quickly moved into California's agricultural industry, a function of their

own agricultural background and the shortage of available labor. In addition to agricultural labor, the Issei first engaged in paid gardening in California as early as 1891.

Paid gardening made perfect work for the Issei since, like agricultural work, it required a rural background and provided recent immigrants with a sense of independence. The first paid gardeners in Southern California originally worked as domestic workers while occasionally performing yard-work for their employers. Compared to domestic work and manual labor, occupations also held by the Issei and other immigrants during the early 1900s, paid gardening represented a more profitable occupation for the Issei.

While the Issei managed to gain entry into the paid gardening industry in Los Angeles and throughout California during the late 1800s and early 1900s based on their agricultural background, their reputation for excellent work, and the demand for lawn care services by affluent residents, the passage of anti-immigrant laws in California targeting Japanese (and other ethnic groups) in the agricultural industry pushed more Issei to seek paid gardening as a viable trade in major urban centers.

For instance, the passage of California's 1913 anti-immigrant land act denying "aliens ineligible for citizenship" from owning agricultural land forced many Issei to seek refuge in the cities. There, in order to earn a living, many Issei farmers utilized their entrepreneurial skills and entered the floral and nursery businesses. Many Issei also took advantage of the housing boom and labor shortages in paid gardening in the 1920s, creating a niche in this sector.

As pioneers, the Issei paved the way in Los Angeles and throughout California for other rural immigrant groups, such as Vietnamese, Mexicans and Central Americans, to make an honest living in the informal economy. This is not to say, however, that any recent immigrant who comes to this country can purchase a few tools and easily enter this sector to become a successful paid gardener or owner of his own small business. Given the informal nature of paid gardening, where few governmental regulations exist without formal institutions (such as classified ads

or vocational centers) to channel workers into this sector, recent and settled immigrants primarily rely on their social networks (e.g., kinship, friendship, hometown associates and homeowners) to become paid gardeners.

For Japanese immigrants and second-generation Japanese Americans (Nissei) of the mid-1900s, paid gardening represented a respectable profession that allowed them the opportunity to earn an honest living for themselves and their families, especially given the anti-Japanese climate in this country. Relying on their hard work, perseverance and co-ethnic ties, Japanese immigrants and their children paved the way for future generations of Japanese Americans to go beyond the paid gardening trade and prosper in this country as white-collar professionals via higher education.

Ethnic Transition: From Japanese to Mexican Immigrants

The gradual decline of Japanese paid gardeners in California dates back to the mid-1960s and 1970s when

younger generations sought professional careers over this informal trade. In addition, the dramatic influx of Mexican immigrants following the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965—which facilitated family reunification and other pro-immigration policies—created a large labor pool of rural immigrants. Apart from paid gardening, many Mexican immigrants worked for Japanese-American employers in their lawnmower repair shops and landscape nurseries.

By originally working as hired gardeners and in related green industries, Mexican immigrants eventually became the dominant ethnic group in this informal niche. Retired Japanese gardeners either sold or gifted their businesses to Mexican immigrants, who displayed a similar work ethic and entrepreneurial spirit. Also, tired of working for someone else, many Mexican immigrants gradually built their own businesses from scratch after many years of learning on the job, or what the late American philosopher John Dewey referred to as “learning by doing.”

This informal trade provides both opportunities and perils to Mexican immigrants and other groups.

Logo designed by Robert Russell



LEFT: Logo of the Association of Latin American Gardeners of Los Angeles (ALAGLA).

RIGHT: Collage of images from an ALAGLA protest.

On the one hand, similar to Japanese immigrants, recent Mexican immigrants who experience racism and a hostile work environment benefit from this mostly informal trade where workers employ survival strategies and experience limited entry barriers. In the unregulated economy, for instance, recent immigrants need not worry about many occupational barriers found in the formal economy, such as providing proof of legal status in this country. Moreover, recent immigrants with limited English skills and lack of formal education can enter this trade without major barriers.

Also, for a minority of immigrants, paid gardening represents one of the few trades where those with low socio-economic status enjoy the opportunity to start their own small enterprise. While many Asian immigrants (e.g., Japanese, Chinese and Koreans) and other Latinos, such as Cubans in Miami, have enjoyed business success in this country, Mexican immigrants tend to be low-wage workers toiling in dead-end jobs, or what scholars refer to as “immigrant jobs.” Breaking with this stereotype, Mexican immigrants who own a small gardening business also enjoy the benefits of other immigrant entrepreneurs, including social status (especially among co-ethnics) and upward mobility opportunities.

On the other hand, the paid gardening trade also suffers from the pernicious nature of the informal economy. Due to the lack of governmental regulations and protections, the informal economy is ripe with many of the same abuses workers experienced prior to Franklin D. Roosevelt’s New Deal in the early twentieth century. For example, immigrants and others who work in the informal economy lack basic work-related guidelines and protections taken for granted by many workers in the formal economy, such as minimum wage protection, workers’ compensation benefits, work-site safety rules, health insurance (not for all, of course), child labor laws and the 40-hour work week.

Consequently, many informal workers, including those who work in the paid gardening niche, work long hours and, sometimes, seven days a week with little pay and few governmental protections. However, the case of paid gardening should not

be confounded with the abusive practices found in the garment industry, especially since many workers or *trabajadores* who enter this trade enjoy the opportunity to one day become a boss or *patrón*. Also, many of these small enterprises depend on strong ties, where kinship and co-ethnic ties from the same hometown bond the crews into family-like units.

Lastly, paid gardeners receive a lot of abuse from their clients or *clientes*, criminals and mainstream society. Too often, clients refuse to pay gardeners for their services, knowing full well that these individuals possess few legal options to secure funds owed to them. In addition, clients often verbally abuse gardeners and treat them disrespectfully. There are also many unreported cases where criminals rob paid gardeners of their money or steal their equipment from their trucks. Apart from abusive clients and common criminals, paid gardeners receive little respect in society. In Hollywood movies, for example, **cont. on page 49**



Photos and collage by Adrian Alvarez

Searching for the Just City: Debates in Urban Theory and Practice

Review by Tom Angotti

Searching for the Just City: Debates in Urban Theory and Practice

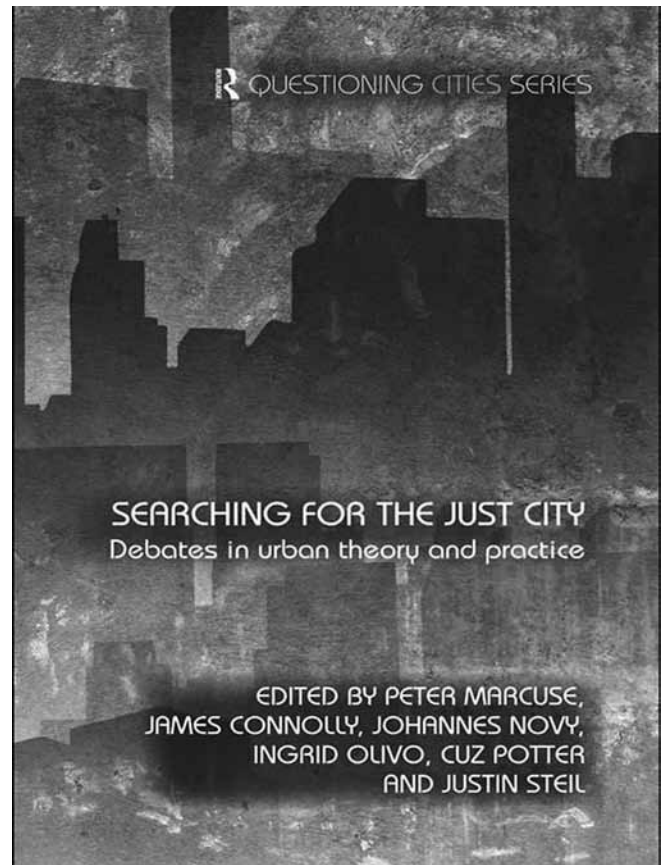
Edited by Peter Marcuse, James Connolly, Johannes Novy, Ingrid Olivo, Cuz Potter and Justin Steil.
Routledge, 2009.

This is a fascinating and important book with only one major flaw: Since it retails at \$150, it is likely to be out of reach for most activists and practitioners, and available only at university libraries. But there's much in here of value to progressive planners.

This book is important because it engages some of the toughest theoretical and practical questions we face. Is there such a thing as a "just city?" How do we shape a more just city? What does it look like? How is the just city different from "the right to the city?"

The starting point of this quest is an essay by Harvard professor Susan S. Fainstein, who roots the search for a just city in contemporary urban struggles. She uses the example of the Bronx Terminal Market in New York City, a project in which the city administration displaced small ethnic businesses and turned over the land to a shopping mall developer. She focuses on issues of social justice at stake, moving away from approaches that emphasize the planning process as the key route to social justice, specifically what is known as communicative planning theory:

Communicative theorists are right in emphasizing the importance of words, but for justice to prevail, it is imperative that the content of speech include demands for recognition and just distribution. Changing the dialogue, so that demands for equity are no longer marginalized, would constitute



a first step toward reversing the current tendency to exclude social justice from the aims of urban policy.

One of the fascinating things about this collection of essays is that it doesn't shy away from this and other debates. Contributions by James DeFillipis, Mustafa Dikec, Frank Fischer, David Harvey and Peter Marcuse draw out this debate, and in the process bring up yet another way of looking at the city—the Right to the City approach, which they tend to see as a vehicle for a system of basic social and economic rights and not simply individual rights before the law. Peter Marcuse also introduces the concept of "commons planning" as an alternative to "justice planning." Commons planning seeks to address underlying structural

issues relating to the land and urban space. Overall, the collection is a rich polemic, with Fainstein's formulation that respects it by launching a discussion that moves far beyond it. The only thing missing is a final chapter in which Fainstein gets a chance to comment and reflect on the debate.

This collection would not be as rich if it were not for the contributions from outside North America. Too much of urban theory is rooted in the limited experiences at the center of the empire. Erminia Maricato's chapter discusses the meaning of justice in Brazilian cities while another chapter by Oren Yiftachel, Ravit Goldhaber and Roy Nuriel discusses Israel and urban neocolonialism in the city of Beer Sheva. Johannes Novy and Margit Mayer also take on the myth that the European City is a model of social justice. However, even these are not enough to serve as a counterweight to debates that are too often Eurocentric and uninformed by the rich diversity of struggles and urban experiences throughout the world.

Huerta, cont'd from page 47

paid gardeners represent two-dimensional, ignorant characters with few redeeming qualities.

Conclusion

This short essay sheds light on the plight of paid Mexican gardeners in Los Angeles and beyond. Much more research needs to be done by planning scholars and practitioners to better understand this informal niche and address the needs of this mostly immigrant workforce. While planning scholars and practitioners mostly work within the confines of the formal economy, too many vulnerable workers toil in the informal economy without the benefits of governmental protections and regulations taken for granted by most workers in this country.

The answer should not be for policymakers or planners to encourage strict regulations and adopt draconian laws that punish these honest, hardworking individuals. For instance, in an attempt to appease affluent Westside residents concerned with noisy leaf blowers, in December of 1996 the City

Finally, one of the most significant achievements of this collection is the leading role taken by a group of urban planning Ph.D. students in compiling it. James Connolly, Johannes Novy, Ingrid Olivo, Cuz Potter and Justin Steil are all in the Columbia University planning program. Peter Marcuse suggests in his preface that they bear major responsibility for the rigor and frankness in the debate, noting "...their audacity at suggesting to much more senior scholars that this or that logic did not quite hold up, this or that needed evidence, this or that seemed internally contradictory." Too often academic discussions remain abstract, unchallenged and inaccessible. If you can get a hold of this book, you'll also see what can happen when theoretical and political differences are constructively engaged and not obscured. (Attention readers: If you would like to get a hold of this book at a more affordable price, please send an email to the publisher to support the editors' proposal for a paperback edition. Complete the form at: <http://www.routledge.com/info/contact>.)

of Los Angeles banned these devices in residential areas. This law aimed to criminalize paid gardeners by punishing them for using these work devices with a misdemeanor, \$1,000 fine and up to six months in jail. In response, these mostly immigrant workers formed the first Latino group to defend their interests: the Association of Latin American Gardeners of Los Angeles (ALAGLA). Assisted by a small group of Chicano organizers, such as Adrian Alvarez, Antonia Montes and myself, ALAGLA successfully forced the city to soften the penalties of this harsh ban and to demand that paid gardeners and other domestic workers be provided with legal protections and treated with the respect and dignity that they deserve.

Alvaro Huerta is a doctoral candidate in the Department of City and Regional Planning at the University of California, Berkeley and a visiting scholar in the Chicano Studies Research Center at the University of California, Los Angeles. He is a co-founder, and for many years director of organizing, of the Association of Latin American Gardeners of Los Angeles (ALAGLA).

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